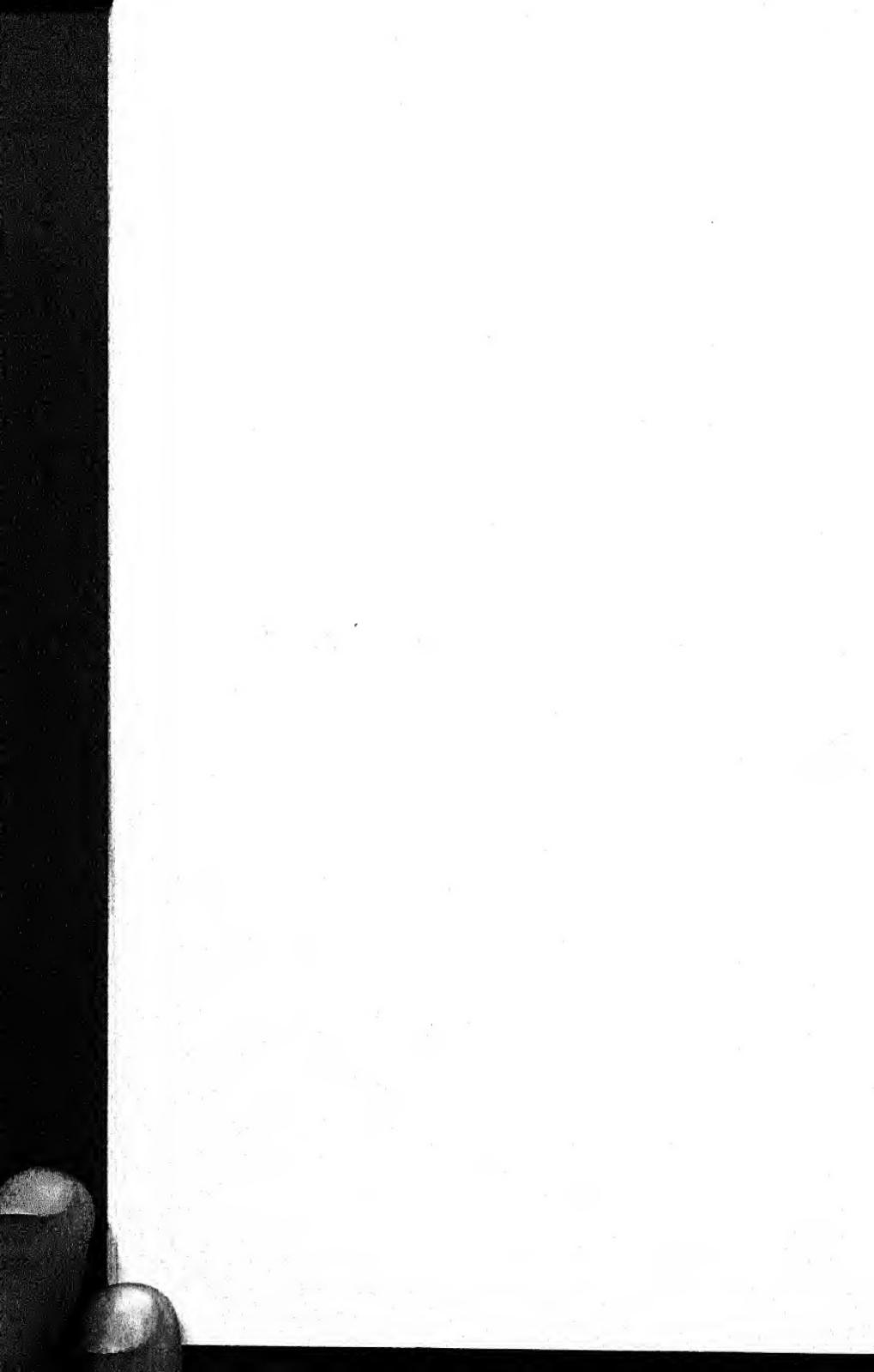


## **POLITICAL OUTLOOK IN INDIA TODAY**



Social Concerns Series No. 5

# POLITICAL OUTLOOK IN INDIA TODAY

*A Pre-election Study*

By

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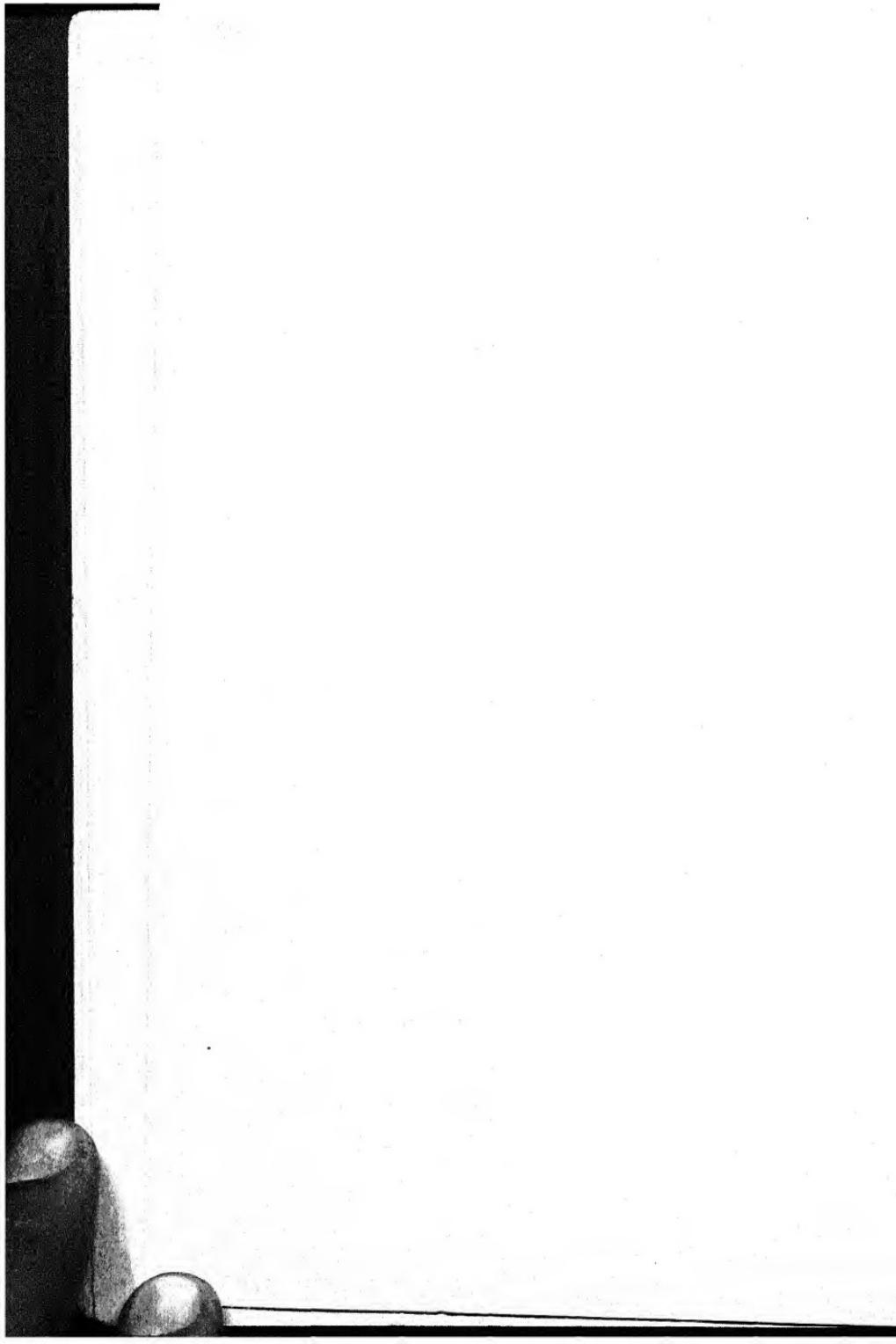
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## Preface

ONCE again our country is getting ready for the General Elections. We shall soon be going to the polls to choose our Government.

The manner in which the people of our country participated in the first General Elections was a demonstration of the high potentiality of the country for parliamentary democracy. Since then we have had more experience of the problems of a young democracy engaged in national development and of an independent sovereign State concerned with international peace. Nations like men mature with experience. The coming elections can therefore be expected to mark an important milestone in the growth of our democracy. They will be measured not primarily by the smooth working of the machinery of elections but by the wisdom of the choices the people make.

This book is written with the conviction that Christians, like other citizens in a secular State, have a calling to participate fully in the political life of the country and particularly to vote responsibly at the elections. The political role of the Christian community is not concerned with the safeguarding of any exclusive rights. It is on the contrary one of responsible commitment to the well-being of the whole nation and to the task of maintaining just peace among the nations of the world. The Christian has reason to be proud to belong to this country with its rich heritage of the past and the high national goals of the present.

The ideal of the secular democratic State is a precious tradition to be upheld and developed in order to achieve and preserve unity with freedom and order with justice in the Indian society. Pride in the nation's greatness should also be expressed in an active watchfulness against forces or movements which might either immediately or in the long run do harm to the country. The purpose of the book is to put before the Christian voter the relevant facts about the political parties so that he may choose his candidate or party with understanding. Christians called to take a more active part in politics through membership in parties will also find useful material in it for reflection and judgment.

Though this is the work of a Christian group primarily addressed to the Christian voter, it is in no way communal in its outlook. We hope that non-Christian voters too will find it helpful. We have here attempted to analyse the political forces operating in the country as objectively as possible, within the limits, of course, of our commitment to personal freedom and social justice. There can be no objectivity, after all, without some criteria of judgment. These criteria, we have tried to define in the second chapter entitled "The Goals of New India". In the final chapter, we have tried to relate political responsibilities to Christian insights. It is our conviction that the Christian understanding of man and the State has much to contribute to the development of political realism in this as in other countries.

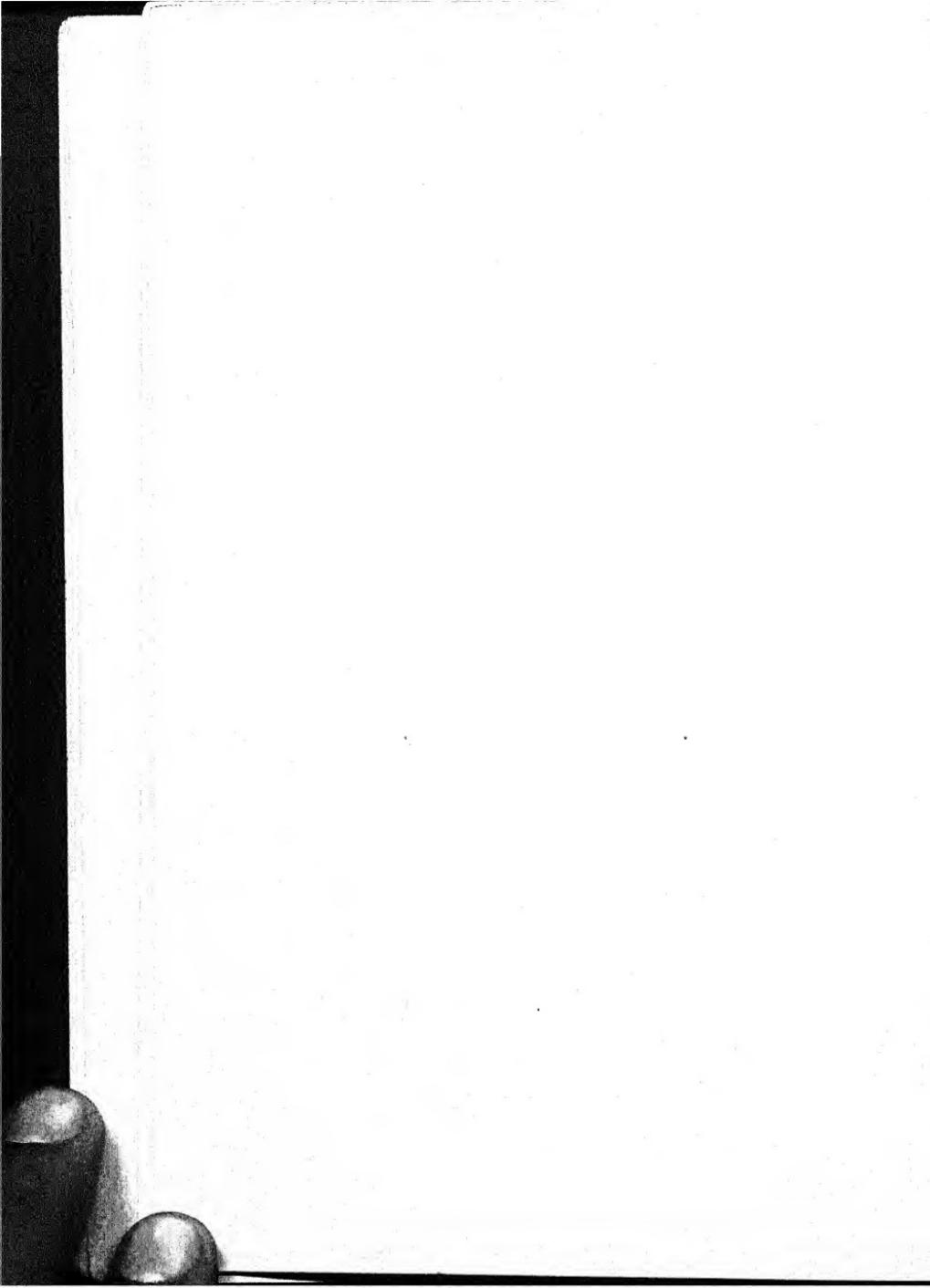
The facts examined compel the writers to make the political judgment that it is not in the best

interests of the country for citizens to vote for the communist or communal parties. This might give the impression that the book is giving a clear directive to Christians to vote either Congress or Socialist. If this is so, it is only because of the convictions to which the evaluation of the parties has led. We recognise, however, the possibility of differences of judgment on this matter. Our main concern is only that when a person votes he should be guided by high ideals for the nation and the knowledge of facts.

What is presented here is the result of pooling of the study and thinking of a representative Christian group. Besides those who are mentioned as authors we are also indebted to valuable suggestions and criticisms from a wide circle of friends representing different shades of political opinion. We are grateful to every one who has participated in the production of this volume, even though it has not been possible to mention each by name. We would like to make it clear however that the authors alone are responsible for the opinions expressed in this book. They should not be taken as representing the views of any organisation or institution with which the authors may be associated, or of the Committee for Literature on Social Concerns. As a composite work, the book may be considered as expressing a general consensus of opinion of the group including the authors and many friends.

BANGALORE,  
August 1, 1956.

J. R. CHANDRAN,  
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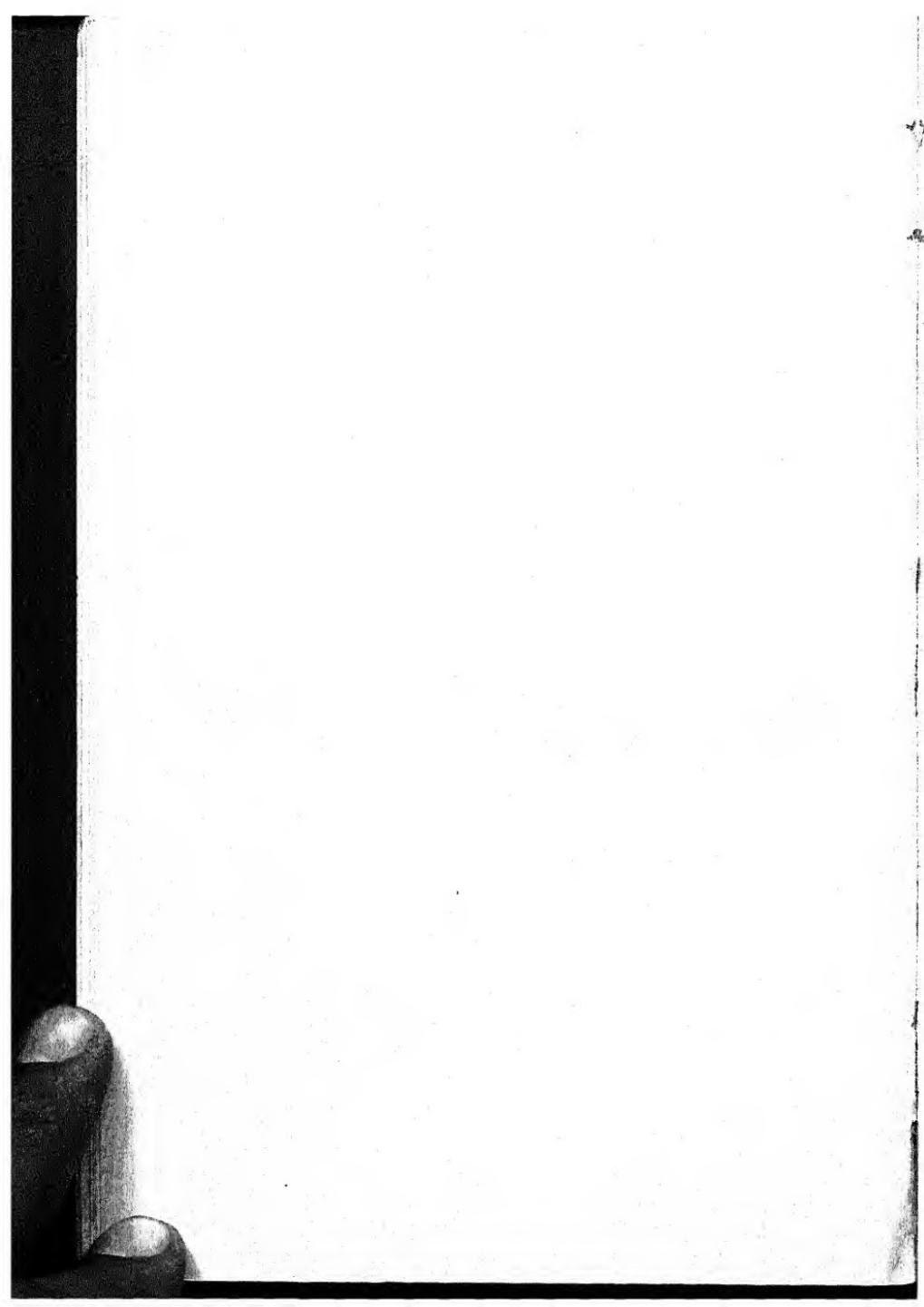
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## 1

## Elections in a Democracy

DEMOCRACY is government by discussion and consent.\* In it the people are the final arbiter of political authority. A democratic political system should provide adequate opportunities for the people to discuss political issues and express their will on them. The press, public meetings and the parliament are some of the institutions through which public opinion finds expression. These have a continuous life. But elections are the occasion when the people exercise their right to choose their government and thereby express their opinion decisively. They are a method by which people choose their representatives who will form the legislative bodies in the States and the Centre for a period, normally for the next five years. The government in power is formed by the party commanding a majority in the legislature. Through elections, therefore, the people choose the government they want. The sense of responsibility with which men and women exercise their right of vote will determine the quality of the government they return. In a democracy, more than in any other political system, the people get the government they deserve.

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\* For a discussion of democracy in India, reference may be made to earlier publications in this series : *Communism and the Social Revolution in India* (1953); *India's Quest for Democracy* (1955); *Cultural Foundations of Indian Democracy* (1955) and *Religious Freedom* (1956).

## The Significance of the Vote

The achievement of universal adult franchise is the culmination of a long process of struggle for political freedom and equality.

The ancient Greeks and Romans regarded suffrage as an attribute of citizenship, and "citizenship" was limited to a selected few, sometimes members of particular families. In Athens the reforms of Solon early in the sixth century B.C. swept away all distinctions of birth, but recognised four classes of citizens on the basis of wealth. Complete equality of citizens was not established till much later. Aristotle who defined man as a political animal was more concerned as to whether artisans and tradesmen should be admitted to citizenship, that is, to membership in the State, than about the right of all citizens to suffrage.

In Rome also, the vote was, for a very long time, a legal privilege for the aristocracy, the patricians. And only after the prolonged struggle of the orders new assemblies were established as a result of which the plebeians also obtained the right of citizenship. With the expansion of the Roman Empire, citizenship was extended to selected families and individuals. Most of the colonies, however, were denied suffrage, their inhabitants being *cives sine suffragio*. Slaves and women were excluded from citizenship both by Rome and Greece.

With the advent of feudalism in the West, suffrage became an adjunct or attribute of some special status. Feudal society had various customary rights and

obligations, and suffrage was one of these well-defined social principles. The possession of land, in particular, carried with it certain privileges and suffrage was one of them.

In some form or another, this concept of suffrage lingered on in almost all parts of the world until recently. It was the historic basis for all property and tax-paying qualifications for the suffrage.

Social changes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the development of new political doctrines, particularly the concept of popular sovereignty, led to the theory that suffrage was a natural right of man. It was a cardinal doctrine of the Levellers in England during the Commonwealth. Rousseau's idea of "general will" definitely gave support to this view. Most of the leaders of the French Revolution believed it to be an essential basis of government. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, for instance, declared : "The law is the expression of the general will. All the citizens have the right of concurring personally or by their representatives in its formation." Montesquieu also propagated the idea of franchise for all citizens except those who were "in so mean a situation as to be deemed to have no will of their own". And women, minors and imbeciles were excluded on that ground !

The political philosophy underlying the Declaration of Independence of the American colonies also was very much the same. In basing the government upon the consent of the governed and in maintaining that it is the right of the people to alter or abolish tyrannical governments and to institute new

governments, the idea of universal franchise was accepted, though in actual fact franchise was limited. While this concept did not fully succeed in the repudiation of the feudal idea about suffrage as a privilege attached to status, it did pave the way for universal adult franchise in the long run.

In India too, political adult franchise is a recent achievement. In fact it is the result of the long process which began with the introduction of "institutional democracy" through our link with Britain. No doubt India has a tradition of democracy at the social and communal level in village panchayats, etc. But it was through the people's participation in the national struggle for freedom and the political awakening it caused that the demand for universal personal franchise became crystallised. What the West achieved through long centuries of struggle, has come to us through our struggle for independence.

The acceptance of the principle of universal adult franchise is also an expression of the belief in the equal moral worth of all men and women. In this sense political equality is a natural and necessary corollary of equality before the law which is a recognised postulate of democracy. As a political theorist puts it : "The ballot indeed is only a piece of machinery. It is a method for the expression of men's manhood. Its use is not itself a natural right. The natural right is that man shall express himself in some valid form touching the interests which affect him."

Hence, in a modern democracy like ours, based on the principle of the free exercise of franchise, a vote

is much more than an approval or disapproval of a particular candidate. It is also an expression of the individuality, dignity and convictions of the voter. The aim, therefore, of a vote is not merely to ensure victory for a particular candidate or party. It is not also meant mainly to enable a party to get the majority to form a government. On the other hand, a single vote cast after careful deliberation signifies the will of an individual about an issue which he is convinced about, whether the person he votes for wins or loses. This is particularly so when the vote is meant, not necessarily for the candidate but for the party he stands for. Hence it is not foolish to vote for a candidate or party knowing full well that he or it will not win the elections.

Even in the strictly political sense, elections in a democratic State are not merely to vote a party to power, but also to gauge the convictions of the citizens about the various issues placed before them. To take a convinced stand about an issue, irrespective of its chances for success, is much better than thoughtlessly floating to victory. The determination of a convinced minority may, in due course, win support for the cause. The history of the long struggle for survival in the initial stages of many of the accepted ideas and principles of today—including democracy itself—is the best proof for this.

Equally important is the fact that the result of an election is not simply a mathematical summing up of votes, but the declaration of the will of many citizens.

Some illustrations may serve to show how important the will of the people can be in modern States. During the elections in the Andhra State in 1954, the opinion was widely circulated in India and abroad that the Communist Party would be returned with a large majority. There was a good deal of evidence for believing this especially as the Congress Party had lost the momentum which it had at Independence in 1947, and had only just begun to make a new appeal at the Avadi session of the Congress. Yet, the Congress was returned with a large majority. The recent elections in Ceylon are another illustration of how the mind of a people is not predictable with any certainty. Most political opinion had not expected the United National Party to suffer a landslide defeat. When the Hindu Code Bill was first mooted in India, an influential section of the party in power was opposed to it. The Parliament was finally forced to take the matter seriously partly because of the pressure from women. The All-India Women's Conference and other women's organisations passed successive resolutions demanding laws recognising equal rights of women with men in marriage and succession and the strength of their support was such that our legislators had to go through with the matter.

These examples show two things. In the first place they show that votes in elections can be an expression of independent opinion on the part of individual voters. In the second place, they show that the will of a people can be demonstrated in a democracy, not only at election times, but also at other times ; and indeed the evidence points to the fact that the form-

ing of public opinion outside election times is extremely important if votes are to be used responsibly during elections.

The significance of the vote serves to emphasise the importance for a democratic State of seeing that its elections serve their true purpose. This is by no means an easy task. At least three questions need to be asked of any elections in a democratic State before we can be satisfied that the elections are meaningful :

1. What are the arrangements made for the holding of elections; and are these consistent with the declared intention of the State ?
2. Are the people offered a proper choice of candidates and programmes on which to vote ?
3. Are the electors in a position to make responsible decisions ?

### The Mechanism of Elections

The history of electoral practice is a large and complicated subject. Whatever else emerges from the experience of many States in holding elections, one thing has to be recognised, *viz.*, that all kinds of groups manœuvre for advantage in elections, and that the greatest care must be taken to safeguard the freedom of each voter. Of course, it is impossible to legislate against every adverse circumstance. In the end a nation has to depend on a certain level of morality among all its citizens, as a bulwark against the

abuse of its institutions. A people has to build its tradition of political integrity.

The tradition of standards in elections, as in most other aspects of public and political life, grows and gets enriched with each new experience. Even during the British rule the principle of elections was recognised, although it was confined to a comparatively small section of the people. After Independence, the introduction of adult suffrage has made the elections a gigantic task. Hence the first General Elections held on such a vast scale were looked upon with scepticism by some and followed with anxiety by many. That the Indian elections came out of the first trial with success is universally recognised. It proved that the common man in India can take to elections and make them work. India can henceforward go through them with confidence.

It does not mean that there was no abuse of the electoral machine. There was considerable abuse, particularly so, because for most people it was new. The temptations to abuse are inherent in the very nature of politics. Politics necessarily involves power, and a real clash of opposing views and interests. In the local taluk this will mean the exploitation of every avenue to win votes. It is inevitable that there should be this pressure. It is not to be deplored. What is to be deplored is any kind of starry-eyed idealism which thinks that elections can be held without any kind of safeguard against the evil effects of a political dog-fight.

At this point it is perhaps necessary to say something on the objection that is often raised by good

citizens against participation in politics. They say, politics is a dirty game. Of course it is. So is life! The only way in which it is possible to keep one's hands clean is to contract out of the life of the community altogether. Even then the truly wise know in their hearts that they are imperfect. There is certainly a call for integrity in politicians. However, it is true that in the political sphere a man is likely to find himself more covered in mud than other spheres of public life. The truth simply has to be faced that in the kind of world we live in, and with men as they are, this is almost inevitable. Politics is no place for a man who lacks the courage both to be upright and to risk being completely blackened in character.

There are on the other hand people who believe that it is possible to arrange political affairs so that men need not dirty their hands. Certainly it is true that in most countries politics needs cleaning up, and that, to some extent, it is possible to achieve real improvement. But it is an idle dream to think that there is an ideal form of politics which is waiting to be discovered and practised. Nor is it a solution to say that what people need is conversion, a change of heart! Conversion might help. But sometimes it hinders also, because it obscures fundamental changes in social customs and habits, which, properly effected, are the means of ensuring free elections.

In our country we are only emerging from the authoritarian traditions of joint-family and caste; naturally the sense of the responsibility of the individual for his own decision may not be strong. Only long-term and fundamental changes in

the structure of society will make any appreciable difference. Yet it is important for people to be aware of the ways in which old associations and sympathies can be exploited at election time. If nothing else can be done, at least we can refuse to support, and more positively we can make the strongest criticism of, all parties which exploit the loyalties of caste, religion and language. In a country that is poor, the temptation to sell the vote to the highest bidder is very real. But the State and the public generally must use every means of combating this subversion of the fundamental structure of democratic institutions.

As in other countries, in India also, election expenses of a candidate are strictly limited by law. Proper statement of expenditure is compulsory. This is to avoid the unhealthy use of money to win votes. Theoretically this is a safeguard against corruption; but in practice, money wields great influence directly or indirectly. For instance, there have been cases of collective selling of votes in return for financial or other benefits for a locality, a community or an institution. The Election Tribunals in India have functioned in an independent manner and have exposed many such abuses. In dealing with the coercion of electors, both overt and covert, perhaps a more rigorous penal code enforceable by the judiciary is necessary.

The Government of India has shown active concern in the past for maintaining the conditions of free and fair elections. Despite some complaints of the ruling party's use of governmental machinery in their favour, the opposition parties have on the whole

expressed their confidence in the impartial character of the election machinery.

Contesting parties are given, in general, every opportunity for the widest kind of canvassing without hindrance before the elections ; and canvassing is prohibited twenty-four hours before the voting begins. An adequate number of electoral officers are made available to supervise voting and counting of votes; and representatives of the candidates, the Press and the general public are given every opportunity to observe the process of the elections, especially the counting of votes. Simple and adequate arrangements are made for every voter to mark his ballot paper in secret.

The demand to comply with technicalities is necessary in the procedure of elections. But in the past, the complex character of the technical requirements has in some cases worked adversely for well-meaning candidates and voters. In the light of such experience, the electoral machinery of India has been simplified, and there is every reason to hope that it will help make elections more free and fair.

All these serve to emphasise the need to take strict precautions to avoid the worst excesses of corruption and coercion. An inter-party agreement to see that elections are fair, coupled with strong non-partisan loyalty to national goals, will provide a reinforcement to the machinery safeguarding freedom and fairness.

## Proper Candidates and Adequate Policies

If elections fail to provide a country with a satisfactory parliament, it may well be because the political institutions of the country are failing to produce proper candidates and adequate policies. It is extremely difficult to carry on democratic government if the only people who are prepared or able to stand as candidates are men of inferior gifts. From time to time, a people may discover that only the ambitious and careerists are seeking election. The reasons for this deserve attention. The days of national struggle for freedom demanded a spirit of suffering, sacrifice and service from the politicians. But today self-seekers rush to share the loaves of power. Or again it may be that the cream of a society has been skimmed for other tasks such as the administrative service, the judiciary and the university. Then perhaps the fact that in a particular state no man can be a candidate unless he has the money to support his campaign may well prevent the most suitable people from standing for elections. If we think of local elections, the dearth of good candidates may be the consequence of migration from village to town. Yet another may be the lack of sympathy and understanding between those capable of leadership and the masses of people. This is a dangerous gulf and the possibility of its appearing is always greater in a society where the educated are proportionally few in number. The analysis of the causes for the poor supply of good candidates may well lead a community to say that it cannot have responsible elections unless it strengthens its life at other points, namely, the building of community, the

strengthening of the sense of individual responsibility, education for leadership, etc.

However it is not enough to have good candidates. Modern democratic States will not work unless the candidates themselves are representatives of strong and healthy political parties. This is not to say that there is no place occasionally for the independent candidate, nor that sometimes electors should not vote for a man irrespective of the party he represents. There are some notable examples to support both principles. However, the independent member is only really effective where there are strong parties; and conversely, where there are strong parties, it is highly desirable that there should be some independent members. Independent members can voice necessary criticism against oligarchy in the parties, the stifling of independent thought and the tendency to submerge the individual in the drive for unity within the parties. They can also demand consideration of issues of vital importance which are otherwise likely to be ignored by party interests. An independent candidate of high intellectual and moral calibre may command the respect of the parliament and even act as their conscience. It should however be said that many so-called independents in our country do not provide independent comment ; they are mostly political opportunists.

The danger in India at the present time is not that independent voices will be lost in politics but that strong parties may not develop. Factions and breach of discipline indicate that even the Congress Party is not as strong as it should be. And at present

there is no evidence of any strong democratic party emerging in the opposition; there are only weak sectarian groups.

The strength of a party and the quality of its candidates depend largely on the manner in which the candidates are financed. No party can be healthy if it relies on the handsome gifts of a few wealthy men and if it requires every candidate to meet the expenses of his own campaign. As a temporary expedient, the parties have probably been obliged to accept these practices. It is time they are given up. Nothing would perhaps do more to strengthen democracy in India than for a larger number of ordinary people to give to the funds of political parties. The extent to which people are prepared to give money for other men to stand as candidates is a very good index of the extent to which the ideals of democracy have been accepted.

It is not possible here to discuss fully the conditions under which strong political parties emerge. Many complicated factors have to be taken into consideration. Even then it is difficult to predict what will happen. The politics of France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are not very encouraging to those who wish to approach politics with brilliant intellectual ability as their main accomplishment. The whole community needs to have a healthy, moral and spiritual life as well as a flourishing intellectual life if it is to give rise to good parties. What ought perhaps to be said here is that the strongest encouragement should be given through the various means of communication to foster the free expression of opinion

on political affairs and the education of a people in political wisdom. No effective party programmes can be formulated where political debate is discouraged or prevented, and where a people do not seek to grow in political understanding.

### Informed Voters

It is tragic if elections are won and lost merely on spectacular propaganda which is produced at the moment when electors have to make their decision. There are some infamous examples, like the Zinoviev letter which was cited against the British Labour Party in an election in the twenties. There is no legislation which can deal with this particular problem. The only way to minimise the effects of such propaganda is to build up an electorate which is informed and politically intelligent. Of course, among all peoples there is a reservoir of commonsense which stands a people in good stead amidst electioneering. But this itself is not enough.

Political parties themselves are a great help in this process of education. Actual participation in the life of a political party is still the best way of discovering the nature of political activity. It is valuable to encourage citizens to belong to political parties and to work for them. This kind of activity strengthens the party and though it does not guarantee a lively debate about the party programme, it makes such a debate more likely. Certainly a party's thinking becomes effete when there is no discussion in groups at the level of local constituency. Then again, a live local party will always be seeking to gain the

attention of other electors and so stimulate them to keep abreast of current events and political opinion.

Of course only a small group will hold membership in political parties. This is probably a good thing. It is a brake on the enthusiasm and the possible excess of political parties to discover that the greater part of the electorate is not very interested in the parties and indeed regards them with a considerable amount of amusement. However, it is a very serious matter when a people as a whole are cynical about political parties. While the parties themselves must accept much responsibility if cynicism develops, it is the duty of the Press, and in these days, of radio also, to be responsible in their political comment so that both cynicism and naiveté are avoided.

A government is always well rewarded when it encourages people to take an interest in the mechanics of democracy. There is a great need for the encouragement both of government-sponsored agencies and of private agencies which spend their time in arranging exhibitions, courses of lectures, debates and publications, to help ordinary men and women understand how they are governed and how they can participate in government.

There are many reasons which weigh with us in our decision to vote for one or other of the candidates. We have already mentioned some bad ones. It is also fatuous to suppose that some kind of highly disinterested concern for what is mysteriously called the General Good should determine our action. Moralists are inclined to argue for this kind of politi-

cal decision. In practice, ordinary people do not arrive at their decisions in this way. Of the healthier factors which influence and ought to influence political decision of an informed voter, we may give some consideration to three, namely, enlightened self-interest, knowledge of the contemporary situation and a sense of history.

We should decry the instinct to arrive at a political decision that will benefit "myself, my family and my sub-caste", but not for the wrong reasons. Decisions based on a concern for people are fundamentally more healthy than those based on ideological reasons. Self-interest indeed has a role in politics. But it may be limited to ourselves or to a somewhat wider association of people, depending on the degree to which we feel we belong to a narrower or wider community. What is unhealthy and very dangerous is the limiting of our concern for people to a narrow circle when in fact we are dependent for our daily life on a much wider circle of people. Today in India, the welfare of any one of us is tied up with the welfare of all; and the welfare of India is tied with the welfare of mankind. Self-interest must be defined in the light of the solidarity of the larger society. It must be enlightened.

Indeed in any picture of the political scene or any discussion of the political issues, we should not forget that diverse and conflicting interests of people with human passions similar to ours are involved. An imaginative sympathy with people beyond our immediate circle will give a certain urgency and quality to our political judgments.

Newspapers influence our political thinking and decisions. Naturally they should. They are the source of our information about other people, with whom we are bound in the nation and the world. It is not possible to form mature judgments without understanding the contemporary scene. Facts are needed to begin with. These, the newspapers supply. If we are to exercise independent evaluation of facts, we must read a number of newspapers and allow for their prejudices in reporting and interpretation, which show themselves after a time. Reflection is necessary to ensure that we have not substituted others' thinking for our own. Slogans are necessary in political life, as they are crystallised forms of thought; but very often they prevent further thought. It is a peril for the mind of a voter to be imprisoned by them.

A sense of history is a necessary influence on our political thinking. History may seem an abstract idea, but people are the stuff of history. It is the story of peoples. The way in which our fathers and forbears lived in the past, created our present society, and how we live will shape the lives of generations to come. We work for social change, a social revolution itself. If we don't achieve it non-violently, a violent revolution will overtake us. It is even necessary to quicken the pace of progressive changes. But it is important not to lose our balance in assessing the heritage of our past. A considerable process of selection and rejection has to go on, now and for some time to come. And we must maintain a continuity with our past. This is true, not only regarding the legacy of the distant but also the immediate

past, what has been called the period of Western dominance. Indiscriminate rejection or appreciation does not do us any good.

A sense of history will help us to have reverence for facts and rigorous scrutiny of theories about the past. In judging the people who made history we shall neither make them appear more virtuous and able than they were, nor less so. We shall not judge them by standards which are not relevant to their age and which obscure both their virtues and their vices. Indeed, we need to cultivate a truly human spirit of sympathy without sentimentality so that we shall approach them as real people and not as caricatures. If such an appreciation of the past is linked with a real awareness of the tasks of the present, we shall have wisdom to make right judgments.

Some may find consciously or unconsciously that their experience, vocation, associations and temperament draw them into active association with a particular party. For them elections will not constitute a problem of decision. But it is profoundly to be hoped that they are not blind but critical in their approach to their party, for the sake of the party as well as the community at large. Others, however, find their political choices a problem. No doubt, the party manifestoes have to be carefully scrutinised in relation to the nation's needs, current events and political opinion. The records of the parties are to be evaluated in the light of both enlightened self-interest and more inclusive human values. Having allowed the whole matter to simmer in their minds they will go out and cast their votes as seem best. But vote they must.

## The Place of Local Elections

We have had in mind throughout this chapter the national elections in a democracy, but we should not overlook the place of local elections. They are the training ground. If the standard is good there, it is likely to be good on the national level also. A people that learns to conduct local elections responsibly will find that its national elections are more truly democratic. Many of the best candidates for national parliaments have received their practical training by taking part as voters, party agents, and candidates in local elections. The use of the vote is not something which comes to a people once in four or five years and is meaningless apart from the occasion of a national parliamentary election. A vote in national elections is the symbol of the stake the adult citizen has in democratic government at every level, from the local panchayat to the Lok Sabha. Consequently the responsible use of a vote in national elections is dependent on the use of the vote in all other elections, and on the understanding and political wisdom which the citizen acquires as he seeks to use his vote at each fresh election.

## 2

# The Goals of New India

WHATEVER be the particular programmes and policies of the different political parties, it is essential that they share the common objectives of the nation. Common loyalty to national goals is a basic requirement of any multi-party system of government. Parties no doubt cannot but be opposed to one another; but if that opposition is an absolute one, there cannot be any democracy. Democracy presupposes that what unites the parties shall be more than what divides them. Without such common loyalties, parties cease to be parties. It will amount to each party claiming to be the whole nation and virtually denying the right of other parties to exist. In this attitude lies the germ of totalitarianism, whether communal, communist or any other. By this we do not mean that there shall be any absolute agreement among all the sections of a nation on a philosophy or a definition of the ends and means of national striving. Absolute conformity of that type is not in accordance with religious, cultural or political freedom. What we mean is a broad agreement regarding the fundamental goals and the integrity of the means to achieve them. The nation as a whole shall have a community of aims, and a threat to these aims whether from within the nation or outside will be considered not a partisan but a national danger. The sinking of differences of political parties at times of national calamities such as war is an illustration of the recognition of common goals.

From this point of view, national goals indeed form the criteria whereby we may evaluate the policies and programmes of the various parties in a country. It becomes necessary therefore to define some of the more fundamental goals of New India, before we examine the different parties in detail, to see how far they help or hinder the achievement of these goals.

After Independence the people of India have attempted to clarify their common goals in the Constitution of India. The Preamble of the Constitution states :

*We, the People of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign Democratic Republic and to secure to all its citizens :*

*Justice : social, economic and political ;*

*Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship ;*

*Equality of status and of opportunity ; and to promote among them all ;*

*Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation.*

*In our Constituent Assembly this twenty-sixth day of November 1949 do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this Constitution.*

Thus Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity are declared to be the common goals of the Indian nation. And they are spelled out in greater detail in the Parts on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy. The Constitution sees the State as a

means to secure justice, freedom, equality and unity for the people of the nation.

Since the inauguration of the Constitution, the national objectives have evolved in several ways in the light of dialogues among the political parties and discussions in the Press. Better assessment of the felt needs of the people and reflection upon national experience have contributed to this evolution. Consciousness of political, economic and social limitations also have led to a realistic estimate of what we in India may reasonably hope in terms of immediate and ultimate national goals. What then are the fundamental ends for which India is striving today ?

## 1. National Unity

We have seen that the Preamble of the Constitution speaks of Fraternity as "assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation". Evidently national unity without prejudice to liberty is a primary goal of India.

There is no doubt whatever that India has maintained across the centuries a certain cultural unity. But excepting perhaps for short periods in India's long history if at all, India never attained political unity. It is the result of the last two centuries, through British law and order, the influence of the English language and, above all, the common struggle of the people of India for national independence. Partition of the country was a price which India had to pay for national independence. Nevertheless when India became free and set herself as a modern Nation State,

it was the fulfilment of a cherished goal of the national movement. The integration of princely States under the wise leadership of Sardar Patel led to further consolidation of national unity. Other threats to the development of nationhood and a healthy sense of nationalism have however continued with us ; they are still live issues in the life of the nation. Every party in the country is called upon to clarify its own idea and programme for the building of the unity of the nation.

India is a land of many religions, diverse cultures and several languages. The national struggle and the attainment of independence have awakened all these indigenous elements in the national body-politic to a new self-awareness, a new sense of individuality. There is a resurgence of religions, a revival of cultures and a renaissance of languages all over the country. This enhances the creative powers of the nation and is therefore welcome. But the situation is also fraught with perils of unprecedented magnitude. The self-awareness of religions, cultures and languages tend to increase their aggressive and separatistic tendencies. The result is the emergence of fissiparous forces of communalism, linguism, regionalism and the like. In their search for political power they divide the nation at all levels and seriously threaten the unity of the country. If the majority religion (Hinduism), the dominant cultural stream (Aryan) and language (Hindi) seek to dominate the nation-state and fanatically claim the whole nation for themselves, and if other religions (Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism), cultures (tribal, Dravidian, Islamic and Western), and the non-Hindi

languages fanatically seek to separate or segregate themselves from the national current either in self-defence or selfishness, nothing will remain of the ideal of fraternity. Imperialism and segregation are both perils to the new nationalism. The true path of national unity lies through the ideal of the secular State and its extension ; that is, the recognition of diversity and freedom in religious, cultural and linguistic matters and joint action for the common good. The sense of nationhood which came into prominence in the new form through the common struggle against Britain, can now grow only through common traditions, built through united action for the development of the nation.

## 2. Economic Justice

The Preamble of the Constitution describes one of the national goals as "justice : social, economic and political" and "equality of status and of opportunity". The Directive Principles of State Policy lays down that the State shall work for "a social order in which justice shall inform all the institutions of the national life". More particularly in the economic sphere, the State is directed to work to procure "an adequate means of livelihood" for all the people and see "that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community" and "the operation of the economic system" do not create irresponsible "concentration of wealth" but "subserve the common good".

The social welfare of the people is the supreme end of the economic policies of the State. Equality between men and women; safeguards against the

abuse of "the health and strength of workers" and of children ; provision of work, education and security against "unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and in other cases of undeserved want"; "just and humane conditions of work" ensuring "a living wage"; "decent standards of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities"—these are some of the principles of welfare laid down to guide the economic life of the nation.

These directive principles are no more than pious ambitions until people act upon them. And the Indian people have taken certain steps even if inadequate. The nation today is committed to the ideals of welfare State and democratic socialism and to national planning to achieve their ideals. There may be a great deal of vagueness about the ideals themselves. In so far as it is the expression of a non-doctrinaire approach to techniques of economic and social organisation, it is all to the good. But if planning is to be effective, the ideals must be brought down to earth and defined in terms of concrete techniques and targets. Within the broad outline of the ideals declared, there have emerged differences of approach between parties on the techniques and tempo of social transformation and economic development based largely on their ideologies. Such differences are desirable. Even as we carry out plans of development as one nation, the vitality of the nation should show itself in the continuous critical examination of the political, economic, and social assumptions of the plans and methods, and of their day-to-day implementation. Within the common framework of Democratic Socialism, differences between "socialistic pattern of

society", "militant socialism", "scientific socialism" and what not, have their place. There is no harm in criticising each other's version of socialism, even branding them as "paralyzed", "reactionary" or "doctrinaire", if it is more than mere name-calling. In fact, such dialogues are necessary if our planning is to be democratic and to achieve the ends of economic progress with security and justice for the people. The character of land reform and the social conditions necessary to secure the economic and other objectives aimed at, the philosophy of rural community development projects and the role of cottage and small-scale industries in the national economy, the relative places of heavy and light industries, the relative priorities of liquidation of unemployment and increase of production, the relative economic merits of private and public sectors of industry and the limits of State action in economic life, the implications of deficit financing and of foreign assistance—these and other questions demand answer. If a solution is to be arrived at on a democratic basis, then free dialogue among the various parties should be carried on continuously.

The people of India will evaluate the parties by their programmes of abolition of landlordism and other vestiges of a feudal structure, liquidation of unemployment and the industrialisation of the country. The necessity for "bold" programmes and radical political initiative in these matters is not in doubt. At the same time, consideration of political stability and consciousness of the social inertia of the people are limiting factors. How far should they weigh with parties ? The answers vary. But what one should demand

of the political parties is that they be bold, realistic and responsible in their promises of economic development.

### 3. Democracy

India has chosen to be a "democratic" State. In essence democracy has two aspects, one that the State shall be responsible to the people, and the other that the State shall be under the rule of law. In one sense, democracy is majority rule and in another, it puts the majority itself under certain obligations. Of course, the will of the majority is liable to change and so is the conception of law. Democracy is therefore never a static concept; it has a dynamic character. Whatever be the changes, commitment to democracy is the decision of a people not to suppress religious, cultural and linguistic diversity for the sake of national unity, and not to destroy liberty of thought, expression, association and opposition for the sake of national planning.

Democracy uses power decisively for the legitimate ends of justice; but it also knows that the exercise of arbitrary power endangers justice. Both these aspects need emphasis. Very often the people lose faith in democracy because it does not use power decisively against unsocial elements, before such elements gain control of the machinery of the State. The people cannot retain their faith in democratic institutions, unless they see, in practice, that Democracy is able to use State power against the entrenched forces of reaction and for social transformation. Democracy presupposes frank recognition of power-politics. But it

has also the other side. If there is any lesson to be learnt from the recent Soviet exposure of Stalinism, it is the utter necessity of the suspicion of any power whether of King or people, whether in capitalism or socialism and the need of adequate institutional safeguards against its corruption. Indeed, as capitalism has in it specific sources of corruption, so also has socialism. Parliamentary democracy provides certain checks on the misuse of power. It is no use talking about the essence of democracy unless we are prepared to preserve the institutions of parliamentary democracy—its justiciable fundamental rights, its checks and balances among judiciary, executive, and legislature, its multi-party system and elections on the basis of adult franchise, and its right to change government.

No doubt the powers exercised by the State, individuals and social groups in an economically under-developed country seething with revolutionary ferment and engaged in planned development may be different in kind from those that are exercised in more stable and developed societies. Variations have therefore to be made in the institutions and processes of democracy. However, maintenance of parliamentary democracy is not a party-interest but a national concern ; and any party that does not share this concern is a danger to the nation. Any party refusing to function within the framework of parliamentary democracy should be treated as definitely anti-national.

One of the problems in this connection is the development of a strong democratic political opposition in India. There are several opposition parties. But the democratic ones among them are weak and

divided. Parties which will put an end to the due processes of law and the right of opposition once they come to power, whether these parties be rightist or leftist cannot be trusted with power. It is necessary for any healthy democracy that there should be a polarisation of the political forces into a limited number (ideally two) of strong national parties each capable of providing an alternative government. Only in such a situation, the ruling party will remain creative and sensitive to the people ; and opposition parties who have no chance of being called upon to form a government are often tempted to be irresponsible in criticism. In India, this is a situation that needs to be remedied.

In this era of increased socialisation of the individual, of the growth of the ideal of welfare State and of extensive social planning, it is hard to draw the line between what belongs to the individual and what belongs to society or State. Even those areas of life which are normally considered as most intimately personal, such as religion and family, have political aspects. Because of this difficulty of deciding the limits of State action in a situation like ours, even the parties sincerely professing democratic ideals tend to cross the border and invade the privacy of the individual and the freedom of the human spirit. Through a genuine concern for the people, democratic parties too may be led into undemocratic intrusion into freedom by the exigencies and needs of strong action and quick progress. Before they are aware of it, they may find themselves doing violence to personal values. It may be difficult to draw a line, especially if it is to be a flexible one. But draw

the line we must, between areas of freedom and control, not only in the more personal spheres but also in the larger spheres of politics and economics. The alternative is a totalitarian State, call it communal, communist or even "democratic".

There are many in this country who ask if it is possible to secure the willing consent of people to make the sacrifices demanded by economic progress. They ask whether the cost we have to pay in an authoritarian system is, after all, too great for achieving a quicker pace of material advancement. The progress of India after independence has convincingly shown that democracy can demand sacrifices and get them. The progress India has made through the first five years of planned development, though inadequate, should not be underrated. As for the quicker pace, Nehru, in an interview with John Strachey, has rightly said that democracy may be slow to start with but will be "faster in the long run". In any case material progress is only a means, not an end in itself; and democracy seems the only condition and guarantee that material progress shall not destroy personal freedom and social justice. Therefore the Indian nation has resolved not to follow the paths of disputable systems of material progress which demand, in exchange, renunciation of the rights of man. Democracy defines the nation's means of progress.

#### 4. A New Social Outlook

National Unity, Economic Justice and Democracy —these are goals worthy of India's striving. But they need for their realisation the growth of a new social

outlook. This was recognised by the founding fathers of New India.

The Constitution of India declares that "the State shall not discriminate against any citizen" on grounds of caste or sex ; that it shall not tolerate any citizen because of his caste or sex, being "subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition" in public life. It abolishes untouchability, forbids "its practice in any form" and makes "any disability arising out of untouchability" a legal offence. To say the least, these declarations indicate the mind of the nation as to the direction in which orientation in social outlook and custom is to take place. The Constitution also gives the State a mandate regarding legislation "providing for social welfare and reform". And the reform of the Hindu Code is a blow to the rigidity of caste and joint-family and is meant to create an indigenous outlook which will give nourishment to the new sense of individual freedom and social equality in the nation. No doubt there are perils in this situation. And there may be differences of opinion as to the role and the limits of State action in such matters as these, but there can be no difference on the imperative need of a change of outlook among the people of India. It is a national goal. This however is a goal which cannot be attained solely through State action. Therefore, it is obligatory for the State to encourage the free functioning of voluntary religious and cultural movements which can help to foster it.

The building of a healthy democracy is impossible without the new social and cultural ethos. No

doubt we have a heritage to build on. A tradition of swaraj or self-government existed from time immemorial especially in the life of the village. Society was a network of mutual obligations that made for security and welfare. The catholicity of mind which saw unity in diversity, made for toleration. *Ahimsa* was rooted deep in the Indian culture. And national leaders from Ram Mohan Roy to Gandhiji and Nehru have sought to graft to these indigenous traditions the new ideas of national unity, social justice and political liberty. And the way in which people responded to these ideals is evidence of the success of the graft, at least in a measure. Nevertheless all the national leaders had also to fight a relentless battle against reactionary forces and the rigidity of social system. In fact, the battle between Orthodoxy and Reform has always been crucial and relevant to our struggle for national self-realisation.

With independence the problem of reformation and restatement of traditional society and culture to suit modern needs, has become more urgent than ever. If one reads the books that are published by social workers, sociologists, historians and economists or the presidential addresses of the annual sessions of the Congress and the Socialist parties of the past several years, one is struck by the growing awareness of the lack of integration between modern India's political aspirations and the emotional urges that are operating in her social and cultural patterns of living. "Social values, social customs and our social outlook," said Dhebar at the last Congress session, "are operating as halters round our neck." Casteism, according to Nehru, is the foremost enemy of

democracy and socialism. King Custom is not conducive to the development of a sense of law. The deep-rooted bonds of joint-family and sub-caste resist the growth of equality and social responsibility beyond narrow grooves. The tribal and the feudal structures of thought are a hindrance to freedom, industry and progress. In short, the nation-state, economic progress and political liberty need to be undergirded by what Asok Mehta has called "a new social discipline of responsibility", based on a new social outlook.

Our aim is a national culture which would seek to preserve, at the same time, the wealth of our heritage and embody the values emphasised by contemporary humanism. This task is ultimately related to the development of new patterns of community in rural and urban areas. In recent years, the community development projects have caught the imagination of the nation. In terms of material development they have been judged important; but their success is yet to be measured in terms of their impact on the cultural transformation. If they enhance the sense of community, transcending family, caste and creed, they are perhaps the most revolutionary part of our programme of national reconstruction. The *Sarvodaya* movement should also be judged from this angle of the transformation of social pattern and cultural values of the people of India.

## 5. World Peace

India struggled for national independence and today we are a "sovereign" nation-state. But the Constitution of India recognises the national obligation to

the world of nations. It lays down clearly that the State shall "endeavour to promote international peace and security ; maintain just and honourable relations between nations, foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organised peoples with one another ; and encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration".

The meaning of independence lies in working out a creative relation of interdependence with other nations, big and small. India has sought to do this in accordance with its national character and interests. There are three separate organisations of nations with which India has realised a working relation. First, the Commonwealth, second the Afro-Asian group represented at Bandung, and third, the United Nations Organisation. Membership in the Commonwealth denotes India's commitment to parliamentary institutions and the democratic method of social change. It also expresses India's hope in the potential dynamic of the Commonwealth itself as it seeks to include in its community the Asian and in due course African nations. The Bandung community represents the nationalism of the peoples of Asia, their struggle for self-determination and their eagerness to attain a significant status in the community of nations ; it also reflects the determination of Asian and African peoples to catch up with the West in economic development and social progress. India is very much one with them. India's membership in the United Nations Organisation indicates its concern for world peace and world community. No doubt, parties do differ in the means of expressing the concern for world democracy, international justice and world peace.

But it may be affirmed without question that it is a national concern.

*Panch Shila* is acclaimed by the consensus of popular opinion in India and elsewhere as India's contribution to the relaxation of international tensions. It declares five principles of international toleration in the present world situation. They are : " (1) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, (2) non-aggression, (3) non-interference in each other's internal affairs for any reasons of an economic, political or ideological character, (4) equality and mutual benefit, and (5) peaceful co-existence." These principles arise partly from the tradition of toleration in the national character and partly from the non-violent character of its national movement under Gandhiji. They are not ultimate ideals of world community or world government ; but they are relevant to our present world situation. In the practical working out of these principles in concrete situations, there are many difficulties. For instance, we have yet to show that our application of these principles can develop a creative relation with our neighbour Pakistan.

However, today men and nations seek peace within the framework of global interdependence, devotion to national sovereignty, fear of thermo-nuclear weapons and cold war between the American and Russian blocs. Frankly this is a framework of power-relations. And *Panch Shila* is a realistic recognition of it and expresses the longing for conditions of peace within that situation. Here again, there may be differences between parties on the relation between in-

ternational power-politics and universal morality as well as on the assessment of the international situation itself. One may want to speak of a Third Camp, another of Neutralism, still another of a Third Area of Peace, geographical or psychological. There are certainly vital distinctions in these differences about which the people have to take a decision. But there is a growing consensus of opinion backing India's approach to world politics.

These goals we have enumerated under National Unity, Economic Justice, Democracy, a New Social Outlook and World Peace deserve the careful consideration of all the citizens as they weigh the merits of the parties asking for their votes. In the following chapters, we attempt a discussion of the character and policies of the main political parties in India today.

# 3

## The Congress Party

### Historical Background

THE Indian National Congress has the advantages and disadvantages of being in organisational continuity with the principal movement which fought for political independence. A brief history of the antecedents of what today is the Congress Party will help to understand its character and policies.

The Indian National Congress was at first an association of educated people who became concerned about the rising discontent against British rule in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It was organised "for constitutional agitation for concessions from the British rulers" as was said at the first session in 1885. The leaders of the movement were Liberals who believed that the British connection was "providential" and that it was the intention of the British to lead the country to a liberal form of democracy. The Congress leaders offered themselves as allies in this task. "The educated classes", declared the President of the 1898 Congress session, "are the friends and not the foes of England—her natural and necessary allies in the great work that lies before her." The object of the Congress was "not the suppression of British rule in India, but the broadening of its basis, the liberalisation of its spirit, the ennobling of its character." The leaders of the Congress exposed the

"un-British character" of the bureaucracy in India. For this purpose the London Committee of the Congress was considered its foremost political organ. In the spirit of Ram Mohan Roy the Congress also carried on agitation for social reform. Gokhale may be considered the last of the Liberals.

The next period in the life of the Congress saw the rise of militant Hindu nationalism under the leadership of Bala Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra, Aurobindo Ghosh and Bepin Chandra Pal in Bengal and Lajpat Rai in the Punjab. Against the spirit of petitioning which the Liberals followed, the new leaders asked the people to depend upon self-help and militancy. This nationalism was based on the sense of superiority of the Aryan religion and culture over the Western, and it drew its inspiration from the religious fervour which they consciously revived. For them everything in Indian society and religion was sacrosanct, and therefore they were against social reform. "Socially speaking," says Nehru in his Autobiography, "the revival of Indian nationalism in 1907 was definitely reactionary." In fact the nationalism of this period combined political militancy with social reaction. Slogans like *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi* gave a new dynamic to the national consciousness. The 1905 session of the Congress at Benares supported the boycott of British goods. This new awakening found expression in individual terrorism and was met with repression by the Government. It was Gandhiji's entry into the leadership of the Congress which made a change to non-violence in the country.

Congress co-operation in the war effort did not bring about the expected change in the attitude

of the British rulers to Indian aspirations. The Montague-Chelmsford reforms did not satisfy the Congress and this was expressed in the 1918 session. The Punjab atrocities led to growing unrest in the country and it was at this time that Gandhiji came forward with his slogan of "fearlessness" and organised the *Satyagraha* League. The non-violent movements of non-co-operation, and civil disobedience under Gandhiji's leadership in the twenties and thirties of this century gave a new kind of militancy to the national movement and brought it nearer to the masses. The Congress sessions were now held in villages. Gandhiji asked for the best part of the time and energy of the Congress for constructive work in the villages and under his inspiration the nationally inspired educated people went to the villages to do constructive work. For this purpose Gandhiji started many All-India organisations like the All-India Village Industries Association, the Harijan Uplift Movement and the like. He gave to *Swaraj* a new meaning in terms of the economic uplift of the masses. *Swadeshi* became the principle of village self-sufficiency. It was at this time that the *Charka* became the symbol of the national movement.

In the wave of the movements of civil disobedience and the political awakening of the masses which followed, young people began to get more and more conscious of the social and economic needs of the masses in India. Socialist thought now began to influence the educated young people. The objective of the Congress became complete independence (*Purna Swaraj*). The socialist influence was seen in the rise of labour and peasant movements as part of the

national movement. The 1931 Karachi Congress accepted the resolution on "Fundamental Rights and Duties" which included economic and social rights of peasants and labour. It said: "In order to end the exploitation of the masses political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions."

With the working of the 1935 Constitution, Congress ministries came to power in many of the provinces and carried the message of freedom even to the remote corners of India. When war broke out in 1939, without consultation with the popular leaders India was declared as having entered the war and the Congress ministries resigned in protest. The Congress was prepared to join the Allies in the fight against Fascism provided they could join as equal partners. This the British Government refused and the Congress moved towards resistance of war efforts, first by individual *satyagraha* and later by the Quit India Movement in 1942. With the arrest of the leaders the Congress was in the wilderness.

After the war, with the new international situation and the growing political consciousness of the people of India, the Labour Government in Britain decided to part with power, partitioning the country and leaving the Indian Dominion to a Congress ministry. Ever since, the Congress has been in power. With the Congress coming to power, it has ceased to be a national movement and has become a political party, especially so since the Congress Socialists and other groups have severed their connection with the Congress and have become Opposition parties. However,

the adjustments involved in the transformation of the Congress from being the national movement to a political party have been difficult and slow. Power has also brought with it new problems. The ideals and policies of all the parties in India have some continuity with the declared objectives of the national movement defined in the pre-independence days ; but more so those of the Congress because its organisation and leadership have more or less continued unaltered.

Let us now look at some of these policies.

### Ideals and Policies of the Congress

#### 1. UNITY OF INDIA

It is through the national movement that the several religious, cultural and linguistic groups in the country have attained a certain measure of national political consciousness. National unity has, however, always remained a problem which the Congress had to wrestle with ; more especially the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity. Nationalism and communalism have always been in conflict in the country. The Congress in general represented the former, the Muslim League, Hindu Maha Sabha, etc., the latter. The Congress accepted the principle of communal representation for a time to allay the fears of the non-Hindu religious minorities ; but the declared policy of the Congress has always been the principle of universal personal franchise as opposed to the communal and the secular State against the religious. In fact, when the Muslim League propounded the theory of two

nations on the basis of communal divisions, the Congress opposed it. It was equally opposed to the idea of the Hindu Rashtra propagated by the Hindu communalists. After 1940 the Congress-League conflict became very acute mainly on this issue. During the war this was a serious obstacle to the attainment of freedom. With the decision of the British Government to transfer power, the Congress had to give a certain measure of practical recognition to the League's demands. It had to accept even partition for the sake of national independence. The Hindu-Muslim riots at the dawn of independence increased the strength of communalism in the country, and later the problems of refugees and Kashmir have kept it alive. But the Congress, under Nehru's leadership and with Gandhiji's influence, sought to stem the tide and to set up a non-communal secular State. The idea of the secular State is basic to the ideology of the Congress, because of the experience it has had with communalism.

On the problem of languages, the Congress, in laying down the fundamental rights of citizens as early as 1931, recognised the need for "the protection of culture, language and script of minorities and of different linguistic areas". The Congress has been very critical of the haphazard demarcation of provinces that the British maintained, partly because of certain purely accidental historical causes, such as bilateral treaties with the princes ; and it took its stand on linguistic provinces. The pre-independence promise, however, was qualified when it found, as a party in power, that linguistic division would seriously affect the administrative and political unity of the country

which was so essential for national development. The high-power committees appointed by the Congress after independence also recommended against immediate linguistic reorganisation. But the Congress had gone too far and it had to concede the popular demands for linguistic States. The demonstration of disruptive forces which resulted by this concession led the last Congress session at Amritsar to declare that "language cannot be the dominating factor in the demarcation of States" and that "uni-lingualism cannot be made into a fetish overriding other considerations". It recommended multi-lingual States.

## 2. ECONOMIC POLICY

The object of the Indian National Congress as laid down in the first article of the Party's constitution is "the well-being and advancement of the people of India and the establishment in India, by peaceful and legitimate means, of a Co-operative Commonwealth based on equality of opportunity and of political, economic and social rights and aiming at world peace and fellowship."

The earliest demands of the Congress on the British Government were for reduction of taxation, economy in administration and elimination of extravagance, because the country's revenues were then lavishly spent on the maintenance of the administration and the army. The Congress recognised the need for other changes in 1921 when the All-India Congress Committee declared that "the great poverty and misery are due not only to foreign exploitation in India but also to the economic structure of society

which the alien rulers support so that their exploitation may continue." It said that it was essential "to make revolutionary changes in the present economic and social structure of society and to remove the gross inequalities".

The Karachi 1931 session of the Congress and the AICC formulated the "fundamental rights and duties" of the citizens of India, most of which have been incorporated into the present Constitution of India. The "principle of justice in the organisation of economic life" received emphasis and is seen underlying the declarations on labour and taxation also. The formation of unions was laid down as a right of workers and peasants. An "equitable adjustment of the burden on land", reduction of rent, exemption of uneconomic holdings from rent and a graded tax on net incomes "above a reasonable minimum" were also laid down as objectives. The socialistic approach of the national movement to the economic problem is to be seen in the declaration of 1931 that the "State shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of transport."

In 1936 the land problem was declared to be the most important, and radical agrarian programmes were incorporated in the election manifesto. The manifesto said : "The reform of the land system, which is so urgently needed in India involves the removal of intermediaries between the peasant and the State. The rights of such intermediaries should therefore be acquired on payment of equitable compensation."

Planning received emphasis so far as industry was concerned : "It is essential that in planning and the development of industry, maximum wealth production for the community should be aimed at and it should be borne in mind that this is not to be done at the cost of creating fresh unemployment. Planning must lead to maximum employment, indeed to the employment of every able-bodied person."

The programme outlined in the manifesto included education of the masses, raising them intellectually, economically, culturally and morally, towards creation of conditions in which every individual has an equal opportunity for advance in every field of national activity and there is to be social security for all.

Soon after independence the Congress defined the economic objective as "an economic structure which will yield maximum production without the creation of private monopolies and the concentration of wealth and which will create a proper balance between urban and rural economies. Such a social structure can provide an alternative to the acquisitive economy of private capitalism and the regimentation of a totalitarian State."

A social and economic system which was neither acquisitive and competitive nor regimented and totalitarian was thus evolved by the Congress as the best way towards rapid economic development, full employment, equitable distribution of the increased wealth and elimination of inequalities. On this principle, a specially appointed committee headed by

Nehru drew up an economic programme which has been the basis of subsequent economic planning in the form of the first and second Five-Year Plans.

The aim of the programme is a quick and progressive rise in the standard of living of the people. There should be "opportunities for full employment which should draw out the best in each individual in the service of the community and for the highest development of his or her personality". There should be an expanding volume of production. For a just social order there must be an equitable distribution of existing income. A ceiling on income was suggested at 40 times "the required national minimum", to be scaled down later to 20 times the minimum when the latter has been raised. Decentralisation was laid down as a means of diffusion of opportunities for employment.

In the agricultural sphere, all intermediaries and middlemen were to be eliminated, which meant the exit of all non-cultivating owners of land, subject, of course, to certain exemptions. The maximum size of land holding was to be fixed.

The election manifesto of 1951 welcomed the appointment of a Planning Commission in keeping with the policy laid down previously. It set out a rapid abolition of zamindaries. Co-operatives would take the place of the middlemen and the farmer should receive help and instruction in better farming through various State-sponsored schemes. "It is not possible," it said, "to pursue a policy of *laissez faire* in industry." It had been rejected in most countries and was particularly unsuited to conditions in India. Basic

industries should be "owned or controlled" by the State. "A large field of private enterprise is, however, left over." "Our economy will have a public sector, as well as a private sector. But the private sector must accept the objectives of the National Plan and fit into it," said the manifesto.

The First Five-Year Plan was in a sense an attempt to realise some of these ideals and fulfil the promises which the Congress made to the people of India.

It is clear from this brief survey of the economic thinking of the Congress that it has been the result of necessary compromises between different economic ideologies which were housed within the movement. Ideologically the Congress has been standing for the liquidation of outdated forms of land tenure and other expressions of feudalism. (However, it must be added that the influence of the land-owning class in the Congress has been considerable. This has always led to the conflict between loud proclamation of ideals and little practice. But we shall not consider that here.) In terms of economic ideas there have been three main streams in the Congress. First, the *Sarvodaya* ideal which is based on the Gandhian interpretation of village self-sufficiency. Second, the free enterprise ideal emphasising industrialisation mainly through free enterprise. And third, the socialist ideal of industrialisation with State initiative and social ownership of the means of production. Even today the three-way pull can be recognised in the policies of the Congress illustrated for instance in the controversy over *Ambar Charka* and the uncertainty about the limits of State initiative in economic life. The *Sarvodaya* emphasis

is seen in the support given to Basic Education and to Vinoba Bhave's *Bhoodan* Movement. The 1953 session of the Congress gave its blessing to this movement as "essentially a moral movement" and called upon the party members to co-operate in it.

At the Avadi session in 1955 at the instance of Nehru and with a view to answering the challenges of the Communists and the Socialists, the Congress declared that "in order to realise the objective of the Congress as laid down in Article I of the Congress Constitution....planning should be undertaken with a view to the establishment of a socialistic pattern of society where the principal means of production is under social ownership or control, production is progressively speeded up and there is equitable distribution of the national wealth." It is clear that the socialist element has gained influence. But it does not mean that the conflict of ideologies and interests has been resolved within the Party. The Congress leaders have emphasised that it is no doctrinaire socialism that the Party has adopted and that the term "socialistic pattern of society" simply gives a name to the mixture of the many threads of economic thinking which have yet to be woven into the fabric of economic idea and programme.

### 3. FOREIGN POLICY

The foreign policy of the Congress has also been the result of an evolutionary growth under the leadership of Nehru. It was with the rise of socialist ideas that the Congress became world-minded and expressed its commitment to world democracy in

international policies. When Fascism emerged in Europe the Congress was one of the first political organisations in the world to condemn it. It also condemned the development of Japanese militarism. The Congress has been very critical of the policy of isolating Russia, which the Western European democracies followed between the wars leading to appeasement at Munich. When the Second World War broke out between the Democracies and the Fascist powers, the Congress sympathies were with the former. In the first year of the war itself, therefore, the Congress declared that it would throw "its full weight into the war effort if the British Government would declare and form a provisional National Government at the Centre". For, in its thinking, if the war was to be fought in the name of democracy, Britain had to recognise the legitimate democratic rights of India. In fact the "indivisibility of democracy" was a basic creed of the Congress.

The Constitution of the Congress declares "world peace and fellowship" as the ultimate object of the establishment of a co-operative commonwealth in India. The Congress Manifesto declared in favour of the establishment of a world federation of free nations and friendly relations with all nations particularly neighbours. India would also "champion the freedom of all subject nations and peoples for only on the basis of their freedom and the elimination of imperialism everywhere can world peace be established".

### The Record of the Party

The Congress as the party in power has to be judged not only by its declared ideals, but also by its

record in government for the last nine years. Soon after the attainment of independence, the AICC defined the next great task as "the establishment of real democracy in the country and a society based on social justice and equality. Such a society must provide every man and woman with equality of opportunity and freedom to work for the unfettered development of his or her personality". This was to be achieved through "planned central direction as well as decentralisation of political and economic power".

How far has the Congress Government implemented this resolution?

#### 1. POLITICAL CONSOLIDATION

The Congress Government had to face two unexpected developments in its first days in power—the enormous movement of population across the borders from Pakistan and the invasion of Kashmir. About 49 lakhs of refugees came from West Pakistan and 26 lakhs from East Pakistan soon after Independence. Their rehabilitation has been completed but a recurrence of emigration from East Pakistan is presenting a fresh challenge to the statesmanship of the Congress leaders generally and of those in W. Bengal in particular.

One great achievement of the Congress was the framing of the Constitution which was done in co-operation with some of the leading constitutional experts in the country even outside the Party. Minority interests were well represented in the committees of the Constituent Assembly which shaped the

Constitution. The Constitution embodies the fundamental rights and the directive principles which the Congress Party had evolved and which were acceptable to the nation as a whole, so that the Constitution was really one which the people of India gave to themselves.

India was declared a sovereign democratic republic, a secular democracy in which a heterogeneous society could dwell in harmony and be truly democratic. Though the concept of the secular State lends itself even now to varying shades of interpretation, it represents the ideal form of democracy a young republic like India should strive for under present conditions.

The forty million Muslims who elected to stay in India have lived with their rights unimpaired and their welfare assured under a secular democratic constitution. A significant addition which the Constituent Assembly made to fundamental rights was the right to "propagate" one's religion. The Congress declarations on the subject since 1931 had guaranteed only the right "to profess and practise" one's religion.

The abolition of separate electorates is a pledge that the Congress has fulfilled. This with adult suffrage has assured equal rights to citizens of all religions, bringing to an end the system of communal representation in political institutions created by the Communal Award. Minorities which needed safeguards have secured them. The Scheduled Castes and Tribes as well as the Anglo-Indians have separate representation till 1960. Scholarship schemes and fee concessions for the Scheduled Castes are aimed at

helping them to fuller participation in the life of the country with other citizens.

The consolidation of the country under a Union Government in Delhi was achieved by a process of integration of the States which redounds to the statesmanship of the late Vallabhai Patel, then Deputy Prime Minister. About 600 Princely States were persuaded to "accede" to the national government at the centre. These states were then brought under democratic constitutions. The retention of the princely rulers as constitutional heads under certain guarantees to them made for a smooth transition, though it meant an almost revolutionary change for some States with a feudalistic set-up.

Reference has already been made to the policy of the Congress regarding linguistic reorganisation of the States. In 1953, against the best judgment of the principal leaders of the Congress including Nehru himself, the demand for a Telugu State was conceded. This intensified the demand for other linguistic groups for States reorganisation and the States Reorganisation Commission was appointed. Their report set off the most violent outburst in Bombay and strengthened the fissiparous tendencies all over the country. The incidents revealed the shallowness of the unity of the nation and even that of the Congress Party. It was clear to all concerned that the Party overestimated the strength of the national unity of the country and the discipline within the Party.

On the whole, however, the spirit of the Amritsar resolution has brought more realism and has helped

the nation to see that national development has priority over linguistic reorganisation. The decision taken by the Parliament to form a bilingual state with Maharashtra and Gujarat is proof of the victory of political realism over narrow-minded linguism.

## 2. ECONOMIC POLICY

The Congress record in the economic sphere has been judged "creditable" by many foreign experts from agencies like the World Bank. The basis of economic development in the country was well laid in the First Five-Year Plan.

The National Planning Commission was set up in March 1950 and the First Five-Year Plan came into operation in April 1951. The Congress also used talent outside the Party. The Finance Ministers, for example, who have served since independence, were all non-Congressmen, experts in their field, who were in sympathy with the economic policies and objectives of the Congress. The Commission has attempted to plan in accordance with the Directive Principles of State Policy, especially that the State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting, as effectively as it may, a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life.

At the start of the Plan which involved an outlay of Rs. 2,069 crores in the public and private sectors, the country was suffering from acute shortage of essential goods, particularly food which was subject to controls. Some of it was the consequence of the World

War and others part of the chronic economic problem of the country. The largest item of outlay in the First Plan was for irrigation and power, aimed at increasing agricultural production through a series of irrigation and river valley projects.

The production targets of the Plan were achieved in all but a few cases by March this year when the Plan period came to a close. Inflation has been under control in spite of deficit financing to the extent of Rs. 350 crores. National income rose by 3 per cent per annum over the Plan period. *Per capita* income rose from Rs. 228 to Rs. 251. The increase in national production over the five years was 17 per cent as against the anticipated 11 per cent. The 10 per cent. increase in *per capita* income was in spite of a population rise of 7 per cent.

The fact that the whole economy pulled itself together and that the production of food and clothing exceeded the targets has established confidence in planning as a means to rapid economic progress and in the general policy of the Congress. The mood of despair has given way to a more hopeful outlook. The moral and physical resources of the country may be said to be geared now for further efforts and more sacrifices that the Second Five-Year Plan will entail.

One of the effective means of enlisting public co-operation in economic development has been the Community Development Projects and the National Extension Service. They aim at the raising of the productivity of rural India through State aid combined with voluntary labour of the people.

About 15 per cent of the outlay on the whole First Five-Year Plan, came in the form of foreign aid from the U.S.A., the Colombo Plan countries and loans from the World Bank. Another important form of foreign aid from which India has benefited is the Technical Assistance Programme, under which altogether 7,159 awards for technical training for Indians and the service of 3,715 experts were received from the U.N.O., the U.S.A. and the Colombo Plan countries. The acceptance of foreign aid without strings attached has been a policy with the Congress. But foreign aid coming into the country has not been of spectacular dimensions compared to the total outlay.

Three things which the Congress Party has emphasised in all its recent declarations as essential for the well-being of Indian people are radical land reforms, full employment or expansion of employment opportunities and an equitable distribution of income. There has been a rise in the *per capita* income, but a substantial rise, making a visible difference in the standard of life of the people, can come only in the course of 20 or 30 years, because of the low level of *per capita* income in India compared to other countries. If the Plans go well, the national income would be just doubled in 20 years.

The Congress Party, however, promised a new deal for the farmer. The First Five-Year Plan outlined a comprehensive policy of land reform and management with reference to existing land interests, *viz.*, intermediaries, large owners, small and middle owners, tenants-at-will and landless

workers. The first stage, the abolition of zamindaries, is nearly complete in Andhra, Bombay, Madras, Hyderabad, Madhya Bharat, Punjab, PEPSU, Saurashtra, Bhopal, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. But reduction of agricultural rent has not been effected in many States. In the Punjab and PEPSU, the maximum rent is still one-third of the produce, which is too high.

The Congress recognised quite early that changes in the ownership of land through the abolition of intermediaries and tenancy reforms would not by themselves solve the complexity of problems from which the farmer in India suffered and which accounted for the low agricultural production. A comprehensive programme has been needed covering irrigation, supply of fertilisers and seeds, freedom for the farmer from the money-lender and education on better methods of cultivation. Irrigation of an additional 17 million acres has been possible through projects under the First Plan. About a population of 100 million is served by the Community Development Projects and National Extension Service, resulting, among other things, in an increased use of fertilisers and better seeds. A landmark in the operation of the Plan in the agricultural sector is the report of the Rural Credit Survey Committee in December 1954 which drew attention to the need for an integrated approach to the problems of rural credit, marketing and production. Preliminary steps have been taken to implement the Committee's recommendations. The Reserve Bank of India is setting up two of the funds recommended by the Committee, the National Agricultural Credit

(long term co-operative) Fund and the National Agricultural Credit (Stabilisation) Fund.

In Orissa, Punjab, Hyderabad and PEPSU, a limit has been imposed on the amount of land which a landlord can resume from his tenants, but there is no minimum fixed for each tenant. The fixing of a ceiling on existing holdings has been accepted in principle but has not been put into effect. Many aspects of the land reform policy of the Congress, such as a limit to fragmentation, remain unimplemented. The Party and the Government are aware of the need to accelerate the programme.

The policy of acquiring the rights of intermediaries on land with full compensation places a burden on the peasant in turn. The claim that the lot of the peasant in the changed set-up has undergone a definite improvement is open to question. The co-operative movement on which rest all hopes of organisation of agricultural production and marketing has not caught on with villagers. Co-operatives suffer from many handicaps arising chiefly out of inefficient management and local social prejudices.

The elimination of intermediaries who constitute the middle class of small land-owners has given rise to problems in some areas that must be taken note of. In Rajasthan, for example, over 2,000 of these men, who call themselves *Bhooswamis*, have formed themselves into a movement for agitation on the plea that they are unemployed and the State is responsible for their welfare. Some of them have recently been arrested. This discontented group of middle class citi-

zens can become an instrument in the hands of conservative and communal elements in the country.

During the First Plan period, employment opportunities did not keep pace with the demand, with the result that unemployment has been steadily on the increase. The Congress and the Government, have, however, been aware of the gravity of the situation. The AICC in 1953 itself expressed concern over the unemployment position and called for re-examination of the Plan.

The Second Five-Year Plan is designed to develop the economy further with special emphasis on industrialisation, giving priority to basic industries. It is a very ambitious one, involving an outlay of Rs. 4,800 crores. Of this Rs. 1,200 crores is to be found through deficit financing, the inflationary consequences of which it is difficult to foresee. About 800 crores will have to be found from foreign aid and Rs. 400 crores are left uncovered. It is ambitious, but such a big effort is found to be urgent in the present situation. The mood of confidence which the results of the First Plan have created may carry the nation to a substantial fulfilment of the Second Plan.

Industry and transport will take up 48 per cent of the outlay in the Second Plan, small-scale industries receiving special attention as a means of providing greater employment opportunities. But whether the jobs created under the Plan will absorb present job-seekers and future entrants (who will be about 10 million) even the planners are unable to foresee with any certainty. Employment opportunities

and financial resources will be two crucial tests of the Plan.

If the Plan works to schedule, there will be a 25 per cent increase in national income and an 18 per cent rise in the *per capita* income from Rs. 251 to Rs. 296. A balance between rural and urban development is expected to be kept up and an equitable distribution of the income produced is aimed at, with a substantial improvement in health and educational services.

The Second Plan marks a definite stage and a critical one in India's progress towards social justice and a more abundant life for the common man. It calls for efficient administration, and above all, the willing and enthusiastic co-operation of the people.

There is no doubt that the Plan is conceived in a bold manner. However, the relation between democracy and planning needs clearer thinking if planning is not to destroy the fundamental freedoms of the human person. The tensions that may develop between the different segments of the economy, the growth of State power and the dangerous potentials of deficit financing may become serious threats to the parliamentary system of government, especially in view of the weakness of the democratic tradition of the country. It is doubtful if the Government has yet taken seriously the training of administrative and technical personnel necessary for implementing the Plan. Economic development of a feudal country within a democratic framework is unprecedented and it requires the informed support of the people to make

it succeed. But whether the educational system has been geared for this purpose is doubtful.

### 3. FOREIGN POLICY

It is in the foreign policy of the Government that the Congress record is most noteworthy.

The Congress Manifesto of 1951 said briefly that "in regard to foreign policy, India has pursued an independent line in her own national interest and in the interest of world peace, and sought to maintain friendly relations with all countries." Prime Minister Nehru can easily be described as the architect of India's independent foreign policy of dynamic neutrality within the framework of the United Nations Organisation. It followed logically from India's past and her present conditions. She had close relations with Britain and other Western powers and had elected to stay within the Commonwealth. These relations she maintained ; and to pursue her economic policy unhindered by any external tension on her borders, she had to be on friendly terms with her big communist neighbours, China and Russia.

But as Nehru has pointed out often, this policy is not one of passive neutrality but a dynamic one. That it is dynamic is borne out by the fact that out of the policy of neutrality has been evolved the five principles, better known as *Panch Shila*. The principles were evolved first to govern relations between China and India after Chinese troops occupied Tibet and some understanding between the two large nations became necessary.

India's active neutrality led to the formation of a third group of nations which has had, not an inconsiderable influence in international affairs towards keeping the peace or at least in lessening tension. First these were the five countries, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma and Indonesia (the Colombo Powers, because of their first conference at Colombo) and later it was widened to include all the independent African and Asian nations, constituting what has been described as the Bandung community of nations.

Because of her friendly relations with communist countries and her neutral position in the Cold War between the Communist and non-Communist power blocs, India has been able to mediate successfully in the Korean war, in the conflict in Indo-China, and in persuading China to accept negotiation as a means of settling the thorny problems between her and the U.S.A., talks on which are still proceeding.

India's prestige and influence in the international sphere is out of all proportion to her material power because of the personality and genius of her Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. India's voice is listened to with respect in the U.N. Councils because of the valuable work done by her representatives like the late B. Narasinga Rao and V. K. Krishna Menon.

The Congress objectives of friendship with all nations and the building of world peace and fellowship have been successfully followed in the face of criticism from some countries where India is suspect because she has refused to align herself with one of the power blocs and is friendly with everyone.

The Kashmir dispute is the most serious problem India has in her international relations. When Kashmir was invaded by tribesmen and the Pakistan army soon after independence, India took prompt defensive military measures. But after the ceasefire in January 1948, India stood for a settlement by peaceful negotiation and a fair plebiscite in Kashmir. During the eight years of stalemate, Kashmir has become practically integrated with India, participating fully in the political and economic life of India. Prime Minister Nehru has now stated that Pakistan's expansion of her military strength through military aid from the U.S.A. and her entry into the SEATO and the Baghdad military pacts, as well as Kashmir's political and economic development during the past eight years, have materially altered the character of the Kashmir dispute and that the necessity for a plebiscite does not exist now. Nehru has also rightly pointed out that the upsetting of the *status quo* now would revive all the horror and suffering of a shift of population. India's offers to Pakistan on this dispute are: demarcation of the boundaries in Kashmir on the ceasefire line and a no-war declaration with Pakistan, both aimed at peace and a permanent settlement. It must, however, be stated that Nehru has not been able to impress world opinion about the rightness of his stand on Kashmir.

India's firm stand on certain principles in her foreign policy has not been without some cost to herself. She would probably get foreign economic aid on a more spectacular scale than at present if she aligned herself alongside of one bloc of nations and signed mutual defence pacts with them. But she would then

have to compromise on her principles which have won her esteem as well as influence on the side of world peace. The suspicions are waning and a policy that was once considered queer is winning more adherents to it, the latest being Ceylon. The general lessening of world tension through the operation of various factors has also borne out the Congress Government's wisdom of keeping away from military alignments.

### Ideology and Leadership

It has been said that the Congress programme for the achievement of the national objectives is a non-doctrinaire approach which cannot or must not be classified under any one of the known 'isms' or ideologies. Such an approach enables the Congress to have a very flexible set of ideas with which to formulate its programmes and adapt the means to the needs as it goes along. This is partly inherited from its past when the Party had to be a kind of mass movement, as said above, presenting a single front against the foreign regime for the attainment of independence. The Party had to accommodate people with different shades of opinion within the larger framework, because numbers meant strength at the time for the immediate objective of *swaraj*. But a political party with a programme to implement cannot be an omnibus party with an ever broadening base. With the dropping of the Socialists and the Sarvodaya enthusiasts out of the Party, the Congress did lose some of the omnibus nature of its membership. But its ideology, if it can be said to have one,

reflects an *ad hoc* outlook which evokes the criticism that the Congress tries to be all things to all men.

A political party may sometimes muddle through to its objectives without a very clear ideology, especially a party which is faced with the complex situation that the Congress is faced with in India, a condition that requires treatment at several points at the same time, and makes it difficult for anyone to have a clear and comprehensive view of the whole picture. Agriculture alone, for instance, is entangled in a maze of problems connected with land ownership, taxation, methods of cultivation, natural resources, social prejudices, laws of inheritance affecting the size of land holdings and causing fragmentation—and so on. Nevertheless, all planning needs definite direction, if not a set of rigid ideological formulas. No party can rest entirely on the hope that if it deals with all complications as they come up, it will come through to its goals. It is essential that when implementation of any plan is taken up, clear decisions be made and decisive action taken, though the outline of the plan on paper may be couched in deliberately vague terms. Nationalisation may be declared to be limited to certain industries, but when it is actually undertaken, the limits have to be prescribed. Decisive action becomes difficult when a non-doctrinaire approach, which could be described also as an ideology of compromise, makes plans and policies too broad-based and unwieldy.

Besides, as long as this compromising *ad hoc* policy is followed in order to adjust or adapt party programmes to the national objectives and interests,

there is no danger to democracy. But if it leads the Congress—and this is not an unfounded fear—to try to perpetuate itself in power by dancing to the popular tunes of the time, the Party will be working contrary to its own objectives and can actually become a menace to democracy in the country.

A danger that the Congress Party has to guard against at a more practical level is the loss of integrity of the Party now that the Party is in power. The reputation the Congress enjoys, it owes to its leaders, many of whom have been national heroes, some of them being known and respected all over the world. While in power they and other Congressmen, who represent the people in the legislatures, are all exposed to the corrupting influence of power. Instances are not wanting of Congressmen interfering with normal administration to secure advantages for themselves or their relatives and friends, thus misusing the prestige and influence that goes with their position in public life. Laxity in control and insufficient attention to routine on the part of political leaders in office have aggravated the problem of corruption in administration. In spite of all the anti-corruption measures adopted by the Central and Provincial Governments, there are no signs of the evil having abated. Effective methods of putting down corruption are yet to be devised.

There are conservative elements in the Congress Party who hinder the formulation of liberal policies, and communal elements who endanger the secular democratic character of the Party and its programmes. The abandonment of the Hindu Code Bill, for exam-

ple, by the Party in preference to a less radical and less comprehensive legislation was due no less to the pressure from within the Party than to agitation from outside. Not all leaders of the Party have the progressive outlook of Nehru and it is his towering personality and standing with the masses that compel them to subordinate their narrow aims to the broader policy of the Party.

This situation developed into a crisis when the conservative section of the Congress, led by Purushottamdas Tandon, gained control of the Party and attempted to change the whole character of the Congress Government's policies at the Centre. Nehru had to intervene to defeat it. He held together, as it were, the conservative and the progressive sections of the Party and actually saved the Party from disintegration. Conservatism is also mixed up with communalism, for the conservatives take their stand on tradition and Hindu culture and display an intolerant attitude towards other communities. Communalism has also raised its ugly head sometimes within the Congress legislature parties in some States, rendering government unstable and threatening the strength of the Party. Sudden cabinet changes in some of the States are traceable directly to the operation of communal groups within the Party. This is an indication of the weakness of the loyalty of members to Party ideals.

Linguism has shown itself as another divisive factor within the Congress Party. Whereas differences are bound to exist within the Party on a big question like the reorganisation of States, the open flouting of Party objectives and mandates by important

Congressmen has exposed again the conditional loyalty which some Congressmen have and the narrowness of their interests, which are primarily provincial. This may be a reflection of the mind of the area or State they come from, but it falls short of the Congress objective of national unity.

When the unity and the strength of a Party depend so much, as those of the Congress do, on the popularity and personality of a single individual, Nehru, it does not augur well for the future. The question, "After Nehru what?" takes on serious meaning in this context. The forces of conservatism and communalism may break loose after the removal of the dominant personality from the scene, join hands with the communal parties in the country and undo all the achievements since independence. The Party needs to reform itself, streamline its active membership, and discipline its ranks.

In spite of these criticisms, however serious they may be, we cannot escape the fact that there is no other party in the country which has the same stability of organisation or leadership. The commitment of the Party to the national goals, though weak in several respects, has been proved in practice. Therefore the judgment of the majority of the voters in the country may be in favour of the Congress. But the voters should see that the candidates they vote for are of unquestionable integrity and capable of bringing to the Congress a dynamic spirit of reform and commitment to the service of the people.

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## 4

## The Socialist Parties

THE idea of Socialism took shape in India as a political force in 1934. They were a small group of young and enthusiastic men who were inspired by Marxist revolution in Russia. Though this group had its separate membership, constitution and rules and carried on Trade Union work among labour and peasantry independently, politically they functioned as part of the Indian National Congress, calling themselves the Congress Socialist Party. This had its problems. They could not take decisions on political matters and act on them since they were not independent. Nor were they able to get their decisions accepted by the Congress. More often than not, their proposals were rejected, because their approach was much more radical and progressive than that of the Congress. But they succeeded in a large measure in influencing the thinking and actions of the Congress. Summing up the total result of their work within the Congress, Jai Prakash Narain said : "We acted as a check on the politics of compromise ; we strengthened the organisation as an instrument of struggle ; and we were able to produce a climate of Socialism within the Congress. The fact that every Congressman today is anxious to describe himself as a Socialist, whether or not he is actually one, is a tribute to the work of our Party."

They also acted as an opposition to the majority hoping that, using persuasive and democratic methods,

one day they would become the majority. But they knew they could not for long continue to be an appendage to the Congress. In order to become a member of the Congress Socialist Party one had to become a Congress member as well. In 1946 a significant decision was taken at the Kanpur Session, namely, to drop the word "Congress". They were now known simply as the "Socialist Party".

### Socialists Leave the Congress

It was in 1948 at the Nasik Conference that the Socialists decided to sever all connections with the Congress and form an independent full-fledged political party. This historic decision was necessitated, among others, by the following reasons :

1. The Congress had ceased to be a national front and had become a political party by the new Constitution, the AICC adopted for itself in 1948.
2. Now that the Congress had become the party in power, the need for an effective opposition was recognised by the Socialists as essential and urgent if constitutional parliamentary democracy was to function successfully. Democracy cannot work unless there is an opposition party that can form an alternate government if the party in power loses the confidence of the electorate. And the party should be one that accepts in broad terms the basic national goals. Such a party was the Socialist Party. No other political group could measure up to these standards.

3. The presence of Gandhiji as a constant critic of the ruling party was a powerful guarantee of civil liberties and people's freedom. With his death this check disappeared. Many Congressmen in power had shown scant regard for the liberties of the people. Authoritarianism and totalitarianism were evident in the administrative practices. In order to check these tendencies the nation needed an opposition party—a party whose patriotism and faith in democracy were not in doubt.

4. The Socialists feared that the Congress Government could not be trusted to bring about drastic economic and social reforms, in order to establish a society based on equality and justice. They were convinced that without an egalitarian social order, democracy in India could not have reality and stability.

It was with a heavy heart they parted ways. Commenting on this Jai Prakash Narain stated at the Nasik Session : "I am conscious that when we leave the Congress we shall leave behind many friends and valued comrades with whom our bonds of personal and ideological attachment will never snap. Even when working outside, it shall be our endeavour to strengthen their hands ; and I hope that by functioning as an opposition we shall make their task lighter and their path easier." There was no bitterness. It was motivated by the highest ideals and the best interests of the nation. With this attitude they launched out to function as an independent political party, as a democratic and loyal opposition.

The Party faced the 1951-52 elections with the following political platform :

Personal freedom, economic equality and social mobility were laid down as fundamental principles. They accepted the need for transforming the society which was unjust and stagnant into "a new society of widening opportunity and output". They felt that functional changes were inadequate and that structural alterations were necessary. Asok Mehta, one of the chief spokesmen of the Party, said that the Socialist Platform envisaged not merely the releasing of the vast creative energies of the people but of restoring to the people initiative and executive powers. In their programme, panchayats, community centres, co-operatives, trade unions, consumers' councils, and public corporations loomed large. Village panchayats were considered the chief organs of functional democracy. It envisaged reforms, such as re-distribution of land and development of the technique of small machines, that would materially reduce the alienation of men from the means of production, enthuse them and enhance their powers of work-output. The Socialist programme thus had the needed balance between State control and private initiative, between central direction and decentralised functioning. With this as their platform, the Socialist Party faced the first General Elections held in 1951-52.

The Party did not fare as well as they expected. For the House of the People, they won only 12 seats representing only 2·45 per cent of the total number, as against 364 seats won by the Congress representing 74·43 per cent and 26 seats by the Communists and

Allies representing 5·31 per cent. But when we analyse the votes we find that the Socialist Party emerging as the second strongest national party, securing a total of 11,126,344 votes representing 10·5 per cent of the total votes polled as against 47,711,185 polled by the Congress representing 45·01 per cent, while only 5,370,361 votes were polled by the Communists, representing only 5·06 per cent. It must be remembered that though the Congress captured 80 per cent of the seats they actually secured less than 50 per cent of the total votes polled while the Socialist Party and KMPP jointly secured more than 16 per cent of the votes.

### The Merger

A section of the Congress led by that veteran Congress leader, Acharya Kripalani, left the Congress and formed a new party called the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (KMPP) just before the General Elections at their convention at Patna in 1951. This was favourably viewed by the Socialist Party leadership. At many points they found similarities such as the following :

1. Both parties were once part of the Congress, but left it because they were not satisfied with it, not so much with their ultimate goals as with measures adopted to achieve them. They felt the Congress was becoming more and more conservative, interested in maintaining the *status quo* rather than launching out with bold plans to achieve economic and social progress.
2. Both parties were pledged to adopting peaceful means for accomplishing social change.

3. Both believed in democracy. They believed that totalitarian methods even to achieve economic and social justice is reactionary in the final analysis. They felt that "once we let go of our hold on political liberty even economic equality may ultimately disappear".

4. In the matter of land reforms, both believed in decentralised agriculture after equitable redistribution of land without compensation. In industry they believed in decentralisation of some industries and those industries which cannot be decentralised to be socially organised and controlled. They believed in an independent Trade Union movement, free from the influences of government, employers and political parties.

Therefore it was no wonder that the two parties decided to merge into one at the joint meeting of the representatives of the KMPP and the Socialist Party which was held in Bombay, in September 1952.

But there were also differences which were bound to create problems. Acharya Kripalani said : "We both want a classless and casteless society, free from social, political and economic exploitations. The Socialists call it Socialist Society. We call it the *Sarvodaya Society*."

It is not as simple as it may appear on the surface. The *sarvodaya* approach to social change is different from the socialist approach. The basis for *sarvodaya* approach is individualistic on the assumption "that all men, irrespective of outward differences,

were fundamentally the same and at bottom good". It also presupposes that a mere appeal to their conscience will make "men to share what they have with their fellowmen". *Sarvodaya* like anarchism envisages an Utopia where the State will cease to exist. The important question here is this: Can *sarvodaya* solve the land problem adequately and effectively?

Acharya Vinoba Bhave, the leader of this Movement, has fixed the target at five crore acres to be collected by 1957 as the achievement of *Bhoo-Viplav* (land revolution). What has been the achievement so far? After six years of hard work 42 lakhs have been collected. This is no mean achievement. Nevertheless many rightly question the adequacy of this approach. For at this rate it will probably take half a century or more to collect five crore acres of land, even granting that this will solve the land problem!

Some, like Jai Prakash Narain, believe *sarvodaya* is adequate to solve the land problem, while others like Rammanohar Lohia believe that change of hearts through *sarvodaya* and change of laws through State action, "are two sides of the same coin, both equally important. There is a point at which both types of change must coalesce, if barrenness is not to result. Many revolutions have of late occurred but they have replaced one tyranny by another. The world has also awaited many, many revolutions of love but they have never materialised. While Communism is a doctrine of hate, *sarvodaya* has hitherto been an inadequate doctrine of love. Only when love and anger, love for all and anger against injustice, find a combined ex-

pression through a revolution, will humanity be able to make the next onward movement". That analysis of Lohia is important if any party is to be realistic in the tackling of this gigantic and urgent problem which is more important than others as it affects the mass of people in the country.

In India, 67 per cent of the total population are engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishing while only 17 per cent of the people are engaged in trade, industry and mining. Therefore we can see how important and urgent is the problem of agriculture.

We find that only 45 per cent of those engaged in agriculture actually own land. This would include the big zamindar and the small man that may own one acre of land, while 55 per cent of the people are tenants. Again, it is revealing that 55 per cent of the total agricultural population are actually landless labourers. When we look at these figures we realise how big and urgent the problem is.

The "merger" brought about this ideological problem because it brought Gandhism or *sarvodaya* as a solution to the agrarian problem. So we see a conflict within the Party, which is rather fundamental. The failure to resolve this conflict within the Party has resulted in disastrous consequences. This is the chief cause for Jai Prakash Narain going into the wilderness. This has relevance to Lohia's exit from the PSP though it may not have been the immediate and direct cause.

There is another point that is well worth mentioning. Equitable distribution of land in itself is not

likely to result in increased agricultural production. For instance after the First World War, 25 million acres of land were distributed in the countries of Eastern Europe and again after the Second World War 30 million acres of land were distributed in the same countries. But this in itself did not lead to significant increase of production. This was due to the fact that "the vital link between agrarian radicalism and proletarian socialism" was not forged.

By mere arithmetical division you may fragment the land into uneconomic units. Moreover the new proprietor may not have the capital to invest however small it may be. Agricultural production cannot increase in any significant manner unless it is fully or at least partially mechanised. It is impossible to do any mechanised farming on an individualistic basis. Some machinery, whereby the peasant proprietors are enabled to adopt collective or co-operative farming, needs to be set up. While the ownership will be individualistic, production and marketing has to be co-operative. Provision of rural credit and change in social outlook are essential for the success of this approach. And that is where the socialist approach comes. The PSP as such is wedded to the socialist approach to solve the agrarian problem.

The PSP did some considerable work in championing the cause of landless labour by resorting to *satyagraha*. What is known as the "Pardi Struggle" in Bombay State is symbolic of the socialist approach. The Adivasis of Pardi Taluka under the banner of the PSP launched out a *satyagraha* to bring under cultivation all or at least a portion of the 56,000 acres

of land owned by a handful of landlords which they were using for cultivating grass. This struggle was launched not primarily for political purposes, but with a view to solve the problem of land hunger, food shortage and unemployment characteristic of this thickly populated Taluka. The Congress Government of Bombay resorted to repressive measures. In U.P. and Bihar the PSP played an effective part in bringing redress to the sugarcane growers who were exploited by the mill owners. The PSP again put up a valiant and successful fight, about 2,700 volunteers offering *satyagraha*, to prevent the U.P. Government from enhancing the irrigation rates.

In the matter of preserving civil liberties and people's freedom the PSP fought against the use of the notorious provisions of the Special Powers Act.

### Disruption of the Party's Unity

The basic cause of disruption can be traced to the attitude of the PSP to the Congress, their erstwhile colleagues. The Congress and the PSP had so much in common as far as the aims and objects were concerned, that there have always been a tendency for them to think in terms of limited co-operation with the Congress whenever a national crisis occurred. But the leftist elements within the PSP led by Lohia have always been quite clear in their minds that they could never co-operate with the Congress even on clearly defined objectives.

One of the specific incidents that caused the split was the Jai Prakash-Nehru talks early in 1953 at the

latter's request. The Prime Minister sought the co-operation of the PSP "in a joint and united effort for national reconstruction on progressive lines" on governmental and non-governmental levels. Lohia's opposition was so uncompromising that he attacked the *bona fides* of Jai Prakash Narain and others for even agreeing to meet the Prime Minister for the purpose. As a result, a malicious and acrimonious debate raged between the two groups. The very mention of the phrase 'co-operation with the Congress' was like a red rag to the left wing leadership of the PSP led by Lohia and Madhu Limaye. They were so suspicious of the right wing leadership that they saw red in everything.

At the instance of the Lohiaites a policy statement was adopted at the Party Conference held at Allahabad in December 1953. According to this policy the PSP was wedded to a policy which Lohia called the "equi-distance theory". It meant in essence that the PSP was to treat the Congress in the same way as they would treat the Communists. Their opposition to the Congress will be as strong and uncompromising, as their opposition to the Communists. The Lohiaites were keen in getting this statement accepted by the Party in order to make sure that the right-wingers of the Party would not, in future, think of co-operation with the Congress as was feared earlier in the year when the Jai Prakash-Nehru talks took place.

Between this conference in Allahabad in December 1953 and the controversy that developed on account of the firing incidents in Travancore-Cochin

in August 1954, there was no controversy worthy of note. But this firing incident took such a serious turn that it could be said to be the immediate cause resulting in the split. The Lohiaites took a very serious view of this because the Party had been declaring itself to be the guardian of civil liberties and people's freedom. This was one of the purposes for which they formed their party at Nasik. The PSP had all along been attacking the Congress for denying civil liberties. Therefore when their party ministry in T.-C. State committed the same mistake, the Lohiaites felt it was serious enough to warrant the dismissal of the ministry. But the way Lohia went about tackling the question was not proper.

From now on, the relationship between the groups became worse and worse resulting in the expulsion of Madhu Limaye in Bombay and of the whole Provincial Executive of the Party in U.P. One of the immediate causes of the suspension of the U.P. Executive was the fact that they invited Madhu Limaye, a suspended member of the Party, to inaugurate the Ghazipur Conference of the U.P. State PSP in May 1955 against the specific instruction of the National Executive. Lohia encouraged Madhu Limaye and the U.P. State PSP in their rebellious actions. Lohia also brought in at this time his differences of a more fundamental nature with other PSP leaders. The *National Herald*, Lucknow, dated May 26, 1955, carried a report attributing to Lohia the statement that "now was the time to force the issue whether the PSP is to be a reformist party or a party of militant socialism". He was now openly coming out with his proposal to secede from the PSP and

organise a new party. A month later, in Madras, Lohia attacked the PSP as impotent and weak and said that "its policy and programme were diluted and the Party was struck by paralysis from time to time and many of its leaders were frightened of the Congress". In view of the extreme stand taken by Lohia, the PSP National Executive at its seven-day camp held at Jaipur in July 1955 expelled Lohia from the membership of the Party.

### PSP's Policy Statement

The Policy Statement adopted by the Conference of the PSP Party traces the ills of India today to the realization of political freedom unaccompanied by economic freedom thus denying 'real democracy'. The answer to the problem is to advance from political democracy to social democracy. While thus granting that the question of economic freedom has acquired primacy over other questions, it recognises that economic emancipation in itself will not ensure real democracy unless accompanied by "a correlation of transformation in morals and culture".

The Statement condemns "the autocratic methods of the present government". It affirms that decentralisation of power is the only way to counteract the evil. The Statement adds "that a decentralised democracy alone can ensure active association of the people with public affairs and free society from the evils of totalitarianism, create the proper democratic climate and enable the administration to respond to the needs and opinions of those immediately concerned. The

claims of village democracy and linguistic cultural autonomy no doubt deserve due recognition".

The Statement is critical of the policy of mixed economy followed by the Congress and advocates "a planned socialistic economy". The Indian capitalists as a class are stock brokers, after easy and high profits and lack the vision and the spirit of enterprise for promoting industries. The Party recommends the nationalisation of existing undertakings at least of coal, iron and steel forthwith. It says that "planned economy and socialisation of industries are obviously indispensable for the construction of economic order in which economic advances will be measured in terms of human happiness, progress and dignity". The Statement demands that the fundamental rights with regard to property should be so changed as to enable the Government to acquire property for its management or distribution and that the legislative authority alone should have the power to determine if and what compensation is to be paid.

The Statement is critical of the Five-Year Plans especially because they talk only of production and not of distribution. It criticises the increased use of deficit finance as it is feared that it would boost profit further and increase the disparity between the agrarian and industrial prices to the detriment of the small producer. It criticises the Five-Year Plans for not attempting to solve the unemployment problem which far from decreasing has increased by about 50 lakhs during the First Five-Year Plan period. It alleges that the party in power does not honestly believe in rural and cottage industries and that the

First Five-Year Plan did not register any increase in yield per acre.

The PSP cautions the people against the growing totalitarian tendency in the present system especially by identifying the Party in power with the Government and the Government with the State. It exhorts the people to strengthen the opposition parties and thus restore the democratic functioning of society.

### The All-India Socialist Party

The new Party was subsequently formed which was called the All-India Socialist Party, with Rammanohar Lohia as its Chairman.

The Foundation Conference of the new Party was held in Hyderabad in December 1955, with about 1,000 delegates from all over India. At this Conference the Socialist Republican Party (SRP) announced its decision to merge with the All-India Socialist Party (AISP). The SRP claims a following of 25,000 in West Bengal, Assam and U.P.

What happened at this Conference is of importance as this would form the basis for all its future policies and programmes and it would also form the platform on which elections in the future will be fought by this Party.

1. They are eager to develop a "firm structure of socialist thought".

2. They intend to concentrate their work with the landless labourers, artisans and women.
3. They have adopted a "seven year plan to power" programme. The Party aims at a membership of "five lakhs in the first year, ten lakhs in the second, reaching the target of thirty lakhs in 1961-62 distributed in 30,000 constituency committees".
4. With regard to international affairs, they plan to strive for a "human civilisation" that would be built on the basis of "a union of minds all over the world" which would uphold certain "general principles even when they operate against one's own system of national world alliance". They criticise the Congress foreign policy as "policies of adjustment of brokerage".

By and large, the Socialists are one with Nehru's foreign policy. The differences are these: (1) They want India to leave the British Commonwealth. They say, Britain is still a colonial power. We who are opposed to colonialism should not be associated with a colonial power. It does not give us enough freedom to criticise British colonialism if we are in the Commonwealth. Further, the Commonwealth has in it nations which are committed to aggressive racial policies like South Africa. Therefore the common commitment of the Commonwealth to world democracy is very much in question. (2) They advocate a "Third Camp" in world affairs. Nehru's policy of dynamic neutralism is not enough. They want India to take the lead in organising the nations and people's

movements all over the world who are definitely opposed to both the Russian and American blocs into a Third Camp. Lohia refers to Americans and Russians as "conformists" in world affairs. The Atlantic powers want the whole world to conform to their foreign policy and the Russians do the same. With regard to "co-existence", Lohia does not think that any power would "allow its foreign policy to flow out of such a belief". He feels the two blocs pay lip-service to co-existence "as an item in the propaganda war". He feels that beyond conformism and co-existence there is need for "an attitude of mind that takes from conformism its desire to check and cure evil, and from co-existence its desire not to impose the truth as one sees it upon others". He asserts "that without a third new system of growing authority, no two war-like systems ever learnt to live in peace". Catholics and Protestants learnt to live together in Europe only in terms of the authority of the growing forces of Secularism which went their way unmindful of both religions. The Third Camp in the present world should aim at such a development. Though this Camp would aim at creating a new civilisation based on moral appeal, he would in time aid it by considerable economic and armed power. Thus Lohia's is more positive than the policy of co-existence of Nehru.

They feel that none of the existing parties make for an effective opposition, not even the Communists or the P.S.P., except themselves and they mean to be a competent "militant opposition". With regard to their approach to agrarian problems they have not yet come out with any blue print. But it is safe to assume that it will be, in essence, the same as the

PSP's, as Lohia has been a party to the PSP policies in this respect.

Lohia has an interesting way of dividing the Indian Socialist Movement into three stages. He calls the first stage from 1934 to 1948 as the chapter of "ginger groups". Their purpose was to irritate the national movement into greater action. The second from 1948 to 1951 was the period of "big noise". The Socialists made a lot of noise but they had "little effect on the basic thought and action of the people". From 1952 to 1955 it was the period of "great indecision", indecision with regard to many issues such as their attitude to the Congress, particularly after the Congress declared their faith in the socialistic pattern of society, their attitude to Gandhism or *sarvodaya* and with regard to their role as an effective opposition or again about the need for a well-defined socialist ideology.

Lohia says that the Indian Socialist Movement is now entering the fourth stage and claims that his new party, the AISP, is the "inheritor of the good in all the three episodes". They are opposed to mixing up the word Socialism with any other adjective such as Marxist, Gandhian, Revolutionary or the like.

With regard to the ideology of the Party, they make it clear that "while every individual member of the Party will have his own ideology of materialism or idealism or even a complex of matter-spirit" they would not insist on any particular ideology as the ideology of the Party as such.

## Conclusion

The split of the Socialists into two groups is unfortunate. But it may be a necessary phase in the evolution of socialist thought and action. Socialists of a non-Congress and non-Communist variety have a place in the life of the nation. We also need an effective democratic opposition to the party in power, if a constitutional parliamentary democracy is to work in India. It is important to have a strong party which can be called upon to form an alternate government within the broad framework of our national goals, if the party in power were to lose the confidence of the people. Such a party should be one that can safeguard the civil liberties of the people and is able to use power responsibly. Above all, we want a party that is not content being reformist but will forge ahead effecting basic structural changes in the social and economic organisation leading to a social revolution which would restore human dignity to all based on equality of opportunity.

When the time comes to vote we will be faced with the need to make a choice. Broadly speaking there are three "kinds" of political parties ; the secular Democratic parties, the Communal parties that are wedded to theocratic fascism and the Communist party which has extra-territorial loyalties and are inimical to democracy and personal freedom. The Congress and the Socialist parties come under the first category. Genuine democrats will certainly reject the Communist and Communal parties. Some democrats may feel that they cannot vote Congress. They may feel that the important need is for a demo-

cratic Opposition, to enable constitutional parliamentary democracy to function properly. Then their choice has necessarily to be in favour of either the PSP or the AISP. It is however to be borne in mind that these socialist parties at present are not strong and united. They are not sufficiently effective and their leadership is weak. The way they flirt with the idea of alliance with anti-democratic parties for temporary advantages questions their integrity and is a threat to democracy in India. Therefore those who support them should do so with their eyes open to the facts. They are justified in voting for the Socialists if in doing so, they are thinking of the basic need of an Opposition, and the possibility of an eventual development of one or other of these parties into an effective instrument for democratic socialism.

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## 5

## Communal Parties

THE militant nationalism which emerged in India at the beginning of this century was essentially communalistic. The constitutional methods of political agitation and social reformism followed by the liberal leaders of the last century had not produced any significant results. They had not taken the country nearer the goal of *swaraj*. The disillusioned people naturally turned to the new cult of Hindu Nationalism which promised to revive the ancient glories of Hindu society and free the country from foreign domination. Movements of Hindu religious revivalism helped to foment the spirit of Hindu superiority. The religious fervour of the people began to be exploited for organised political movements. In this development Maharashtra and Bengal took the lead.

It was Bal Gangadhara Tilak who organised the Ganapathy and Shivaji festivals as expressions of the national aspirations of the people. The educated classes participated in large numbers and in fact gave the leadership to the celebrations. Lectures, processions and the singing of patriotic songs were the main features of the festivals. They became the means of propagating nationalism. The training given to young volunteers in the art of fencing and the like was an indication of the militant spirit already operating. The organisation of the *Kali* festivals in Bengal was also a similar expression of the spirit of

nationalism. The immediate occasion for this was the agitation against the partition of Bengal. The identification of India with the "Mother" and the popularisation of "Vande Matharam" as the national song helped to rouse many to a passion for *swaraj*. Bepin Chandra Pal and Aurabindo Ghosh lent their strong support to this movement. Tilak's slogan "*Swaraj* is my birthright and I will have it" echoed throughout the land and electrified the nation.

The identification of nationalism with the current revival of Hindu cults was given emotional appeal by reference to the past history of the nation. The people were reminded of the pristine pure origin of the Aryan race in the Arctic regions, of their inimitable Vedas which sang of "over the land from sea to sea one nation", of their great and glorious history under their great emperors of the Maurya and the Gupta dynasties, of the freedom and lustre of the nation "till the invasions of the murdering hordes of Mussalman free-booters". The stories of Shatrapathi Shivaji and Guru Singh and their noble band of heroes were recited to show how they shed their last drop of blood for the freedom of the Motherland and how "the indomitable and unconquerable Race spirit called them to rally to the Hindu standard and wipe out the opposing forces". The nationalists began to take pride in the events of 1857 as a courageous bid on the part of the Hindu militia, with the aid of Rajput Chiefs, to overthrow the rulers. The Hindu Nation was portrayed as a mighty lion which could easily shake off the intruders by its might. The Hindu youth of Punjab, Bengal and Maharashtra were roused by this wave of enthusiastic nationalism and religious fervour

to offer themselves at the altar of the country like the Rajput heroes of old. Their enthusiasm led them to terrorist activities which resulted in a heavy toll of lives, both of the conquered and the conquerors. The national movement entered a period of continuous violent outbursts of individual terrorism.

While one may regret this and other later perversions of nationalism linked with religious emotions, we cannot but admit the political legitimacy of a conquered nation seeking the support of religious emotions for its struggle. That it has seeds of destruction in it has been proved by its history. It should however be recognised that the healthy nationalism which finally led to our independence also owes a great deal to Tilak and other early leaders of this movement.

It was only after the advent of the Gandhian era that violence was deliberately eschewed and nationalism became more than Hindu nationalism. Gandhi's entry into Indian politics heralded a new epoch in the country. His insistence on purity of means, even in the fight against the mightiest of world powers, his identification with the toiling masses and his superhuman capacity to feel with them and talk to them of their problems, gave to the national movement a new orientation. Under him the movement grew to immense proportions. The movement became concerned with truth, justice, non-violence and other universal human values. Gandhi's religious appeal was more linked with reformed Hinduism than with orthodoxy and communal interests. Hindu communalism had to beat

a retreat and lie low during the momentous years of the national struggle.

The activities of the All-India Muslim League were an important factor that contributed to the growth of communalism in the country. The League was founded to "protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Mussalmans of India". The League and the Indian National Congress did act together, and in mutual goodwill, for some years after the Congress also adopted the principle of communal representation in electoral bodies. Gandhiji was one of the foremost leaders of the Indian Muslims in the Khilafat agitation. But after those days the two organisations never saw eye to eye and an ever-widening stream separated them. The League raised the cry of "Islam in danger" and thus got itself securely entrenched in the minds of the Muslims of the country. The tension between the communities were such that any slight incident would set off violent Hindu-Muslim riots. In 1940 the League propounded the astonishing two-nation theory and demanded a homeland for Muslims. The 1946 elections were fought on this issue by the League and excepting for the North-Western Frontier Province, almost the entire Muslim preponderant States in the country arrayed themselves behind the League in the demand for Pakistan. The aggressive Muslim communalism, led and canalised by the League, succeeded in getting the country partitioned.

The British Government also had a hand in the growth of communalism. The government deliberately sought to separate the communities and set

them up against the stream of nationalist sentiment. It launched upon a policy of crafty favouritism to the Muslims : "of the two wives the Muslim was the favourite". This policy continued right up to the last with disastrous consequences to the country. The All-India Muslim League was encouraged to pitch its aim high with the logical result that the League hatched its two-nation theory and the demand for Pakistan. Hindu Communalists like the RSS were also encouraged by the Government as it suited their policy of "divide and rule".

Inevitable conflicts between the communities were the result. Aggressive Hindu communalism, which was rather dormant in the thirties and early forties, now arrogated to itself the right to act for the Residuary State and carried on a programme of loot, arson and murder vying with the rabid Muslim communalists. Ironically enough, Gandhiji at whose insistence violence and communalism were rejected by the nation, had to pay with his life for his opposition to communalism.

The supreme price the nation had to pay by the death of Gandhiji at the hands of a Hindu communalist turned the nation against communalists and their parties for a time. The RSS had to go underground because of the ban imposed on it by the Government. The Hindu Mahasabha, which was vociferous in its demand for a Hindu Rashtra, had to abjure politics for a period of two years. But by 1949 both the parties had resumed their normal activities in the political arena of the country. By the time of the first General Elections under the new Constitution, two

more communal parties entered the fight with more or less similar aims and objectives.

A Hindu theocratic State for Akhanda Bharat is the political aim of these parties. They proclaim this goal over against the Congress ideal of a secular democratic republic. They consider this latter a foreign import quite unsuited to the genius of India and inimical to the interests of the Hindu community. The Congress, led by an "irreligious Nehru", is a betrayal of the Hindu nationhood. In these formative years of the country, the Hindu "nation" must assert itself and set up a strong Hindu Rashtra. That would be the answer to the challenge of Pakistan across the border.

Pakistan's actions have strengthened the communal parties in India. She has proclaimed herself as an Islamic Republic with two types of citizenship written into her Constitution. Thousands of Hindus are still trekking into India, leaving behind everything they possess, for the mere fault of their being Hindus. Kashmir has become a veritable bone of contention and a focus of international power politics.

The communal parties feel that the Congress led by Nehru is also destroying the Hindu social structure, upsetting the hoary customs of divine origin. The country under the Congress has lost sight of the true Hindu Nationhood in "their wild goose chase after the phantasm of founding a secular democratic State", in the country.

So the communalists have their programmes clear. They must enter the fray and fight the elections on the basis of their objectives and programme. They

must capture power by winning the electorate to their side. Once they get power, they know how to keep it through other means.

### HINDU COMMUNAL PARTIES

#### The Hindu Mahasabha

The Hindu Mahasabha is the oldest among the Hindu communal parties. Though the Hindu Mahasabha was formed about three decades ago, it was Vir Savarkar who infused new life into it and reorganised it on the foundations of Hindu Rashtra. The objects of the Sabha may be summarised as follows :

##### 1. AKHANDA BHARAT

The word "Hindu" has been defined in the Constitution of the Sabha to mean "a person who regards this land as his holy land, that is, professes any religion of Bharatiya origin including Vaidikism, Sanathanism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Arya Samaj or Brahma Samaj". Two ideas are present in this definition. One, the geographical integrity of the Hindu nation ; the other, its religious and cultural integrity.

The establishment of the geographical integrity of Hindusthan, of Akhanda Bharat, is a primary aim of Hindu Mahasabha. "Akhanda Bharat is our birth-right and we shall have it." The Sabha therefore repudiates "the Congress acceptance of Pakistan as an independent sovereign State" and wants "the areas seceded to be reunited with and restored as integral parts of Bharat". But so long as these areas "remain separate", the Sabha will adopt "the policy of strict

reciprocity to Pakistan". If necessary, it "will not hesitate to force" part of the Muslim population in India to "migrate to Pakistan so as to maintain parity in migration".

Bharat is Hindu in outlook. Therefore adherents of religions other than those of Hindu origin, are aliens to Bharat. "A change in religion connotes change in nationality," says the Sabha. Several implications arise from this doctrine. Firstly, the Sabha believes in the "reclamation of all those who have left the Hindu fold" and puts special stress on "the reconversion of those who have left Hinduism". Secondly, the Sabha demands "a ban on foreign missions" and "naturalisation" of the adherents of other religions in the land. (Naturalisation may be some sort of Hinduisation, if not reconversion itself.) Thirdly, it stands for discrimination between Hindu and non-Hindu. Though this is their real attitude, there is some vagueness in their declarations. "Equal civic rights and religious freedom" are promised in normal times ; but "in the event of war or some such emergency", discrimination "between Hindu and non-Hindu nationals" or even, "between different sections of the Hindus themselves" is "deemed necessary". In 1950, in order to allay the fears of the non-Hindu minorities regarding their status in the Hindu Rashtra, the Sabha resolved to "throw its doors open to all non-Hindu minorities so far as the parliamentary part of its activities are concerned, in carrying through its accepted programme through the legislatures".

The Sabha's goal of social and cultural integration of Bharat is spelled out in detail. In the first

place it means rejection of foreign culture and its influences. The Constitution of India will be amended to cut out what has been "borrowed" from the Constitutions of Western countries, so that it may be "in consonance with the culture and tradition of the land". The revival of the "ancient Indian motto of plain living and high thinking", and "promotion of cow protection and abolition of cow slaughter" are mentioned. It is the aim of the Sabha to revive the "glorious ideals of Aryan womanhood". The Sabha's adherence to the traditional social structure is indicated by its strong opposition to "all enactments as the Hindu Code Bill, the Hindu Marriage Act" which to them are "anti-Hindu". For fostering "common cultural consciousness", Sanskrit will be made "a compulsory subject of study". "The *lingua franca* of the Hindu Rashtra shall be Hindi and the official calendar the Vikramiya calendar." The purpose of education will be to "bring up every citizen as a god-fearing person deeply devoted to the culture and heritage of the land". The State shall "actively participate" in national religious festivals and will "enlist fullest possible co-operation of dharmic and spiritual leaders of the nation" in awakening the moral and cultural sense of the masses.

## 2. HINDU STATE

The State is the instrument of the nation. The Sabha seeks to establish a Hindu State which shall deliberately work for the geographical, religious and cultural integration of Bharat. The Government must "call itself a champion of Hindu causes". The Sabha is committed to militarism. It "aims at making the

entire Hindudom military-minded"; it wants to "develop the country as a first rate military power to make its voice felt in the United Nations Organisation". Their programme of militarisation of the country seems clear cut: rapid militarisation of the civil population, training of "Hindu youth" in "modern scientific warfare", with the aid of advanced friendly States, "adequate representation" to the members of the armed forces in "determining the policies of the country", and *ex-officio* Cabinet membership to the Commander-in-Chief. The Sabha will "make military education compulsory for young men between the ages of 18 and 25 and will relax the rigours of the Arms Act and issue licences liberally to those in border areas".

Yet the aim of the Sabha is defined by them as the establishing of a "real democratic State in Hindustan". It means "a Hindu government of their own design" solving their problems "in their own way".

The Hindu Rashtra will have "no Commonwealth relationship". It is the Sabha's goal to set up Bharat as a "national home of the world Hindus, and Hindus of the world shall have legal claim upon it". In foreign policy, "the consummation of the Hindu's ideal of Pan-Hindu bloc independent of the existing blocs with a common mutually-agreed defence, economic and cultural policy is the ardent ambition of the Hindu Mahasabha".

This conception of State coupled with the idea of a Pan-Hindu bloc looks very much like pre-war Fascism. The parallel is a very real one.

### 3. ECONOMIC POLICY

The economic policy of the Sabha is the support of entrenched feudal and capitalist interests. But conservative and radical proposals jostle cheek by jowl in its declared economic programme. It "recognises the sanctity of private property and guarantees its possession and inheritance to its owners", even while advocating State control of key industries, banking, etc. It promises to follow a course which will "yield best results no matter whether it is communistic, socialistic or capitalistic or even a combination of all". The Sabha rejects class-war as well as the ideal of a classless society.

Today the Mahasabha claims a total membership of two lakhs twenty-five thousands on its rolls. During the last General Elections, the Hindu Mahasabha captured 4 seats in the Parliament out of 31 contested and 1 seat in the Council of States. They secured 0·91 per cent of the valid votes. Out of the 3,280 seats in the various State Assemblies, the Hindu Mahasabha contested for 211 seats and secured 20. (Congress won 2,247.) 0·83 per cent of the total votes were cast in their favour. (Congress secured 42·36 per cent.) The Hindu Mahasabha with a strength of 12 is the recognised main opposition party in the Madhya Bharat Assembly. In the bye-elections for the Lok Sabha which were held since 1952, the Hindu Mahasabha and its allied parties such as the Jana Sangh and the Ram Rajya Parishad secured among themselves 1 seat out of 25 with a record of 1·9 per cent of the votes. (Congress 50·4 per cent.) In the State Assembly bye-elections they secured 4·6 per cent of the votes.

## The Bharatiya Jan Sangh

The Jan Sangh was formed in 1951 by the late Syama Prasad Mookerji, mainly to fight the Congress in the General Elections. The Sangh professes the same ideology as the Hindu Mahasabha, though couched in a less naked language. It professes also to stress the economic programme it offers, on the basis of *gramathantra*—economic and administrative decentralisation. The fundamental tenets of the Sangh may be briefly mentioned.

### 1. AKHANDA BHARAT

"Akhanda Bharat is an article of faith with the Jan Sangh," said Mookerji in his presidential address at the opening convention. To the Sangh, from the Himalayas in the North to Kanyakumari in the South, all Bharat has always been one and indivisible, "an organic whole, geographically, historically and culturally".

The Sangh, according to its manifesto, adores "every particle of this land" and worships it as *Bharat Matha*. The Sangh's distinctive character is its constant preoccupation with Pakistan and the problem of the Hindu minority there. It considers that "partition was a tragic folly" and seeks a reunited Bharat. To quote the manifesto: "If any part of Pakistan, disgusted with its system of government and drawn to our peaceful life, wants to establish relation with *Bharatvarsh*, the Jan Sangh would welcome the move."

"The Bharatiya culture is like *Bharatvarsh*, one and indivisible flown down from the Vedas in unbroken

continuity," says the Sangh, "Any talk of composite culture is therefore not only illogical but also dangerous, for it tends to weaken national unity and encourages fissiparous tendencies". The Sangh's cultural aim is "the rebuilding of Bharat on the basis of *Bharatiya samskriti* and *maryada*". With this end in view, it hopes to "reawaken the latent unity in Hindu society". For unifying the nation, the Sangh shall also "restore to the national life-current" those citizens who have been "denationalised or otherwise influenced in favour of foreign ideas"; and those who "owe extra-territorial loyalties out of selfish motives will be dealt with with a firm hand".

The Sangh advocates the introduction of "Hindi as the common national language without delay". It will not recognise "English or Urdu" as an Indian language; and will "remove them from the list of languages recognised in the Constitution". Education of Bharat will be based on "Bharatiya culture in spirit, form and content". Girls shall be educated to become "ideal housewives and mothers". Ayurveda will be developed "in the light of modern science" as "the national medical system of Bharat". Jan Sangh will "impose a complete ban on cow slaughter"; for the cow is "the eternal symbol of our culture". In its declared social politics, its resolve to work for the welfare of backward classes by "removing their disabilities and social inequalities of the caste system" is progressive.

## 2. DHARMA RAJYA

Bharatiya State will be a *dharma rajya*, that is, a State leading to the attainment of "*abhyudaya* and

*nishreyas*". The Jan Sangh considers the secularism of the Indian State today as no more than a cover for the policy of Muslim appeasement. Mookerji said that he did not find any communalism in the country, "except the new policy of Muslim appeasement which has been started by Nehru and his friends ; the cry of communalism raised by Nehru is to sidetrack the real issues before the country". Contrary to Nehru, the Jan Sangh shall build a modern progressive and militarily strong State "on the basis of Bharatiya culture and true Bharatiya nationalism which is based on undivided allegiance to Bharat as a whole and her eternal culture". It considers "unitary form of government" more suited to maintain "the unity and integrity of the country" than the federal form. Pandit Nehru equated the Jan Sangh conception of Hindu State with that of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and characterised the Sangh as "the counterpart of the Muslim League ; it is its exact mirror, its inverted image".

The Jan Sangh was able to secure 3 seats out of 93 contested for the Lok Sabha and 1 in the upper house. The Sangh secured 3·05 per cent of the total valid votes polled in the Lok Sabha elections. The total strength of the Sangh in the various State Assemblies such as West Bengal, Rajasthan, Delhi, Madhya Bharat, etc., is 33. It contested 742 seats. About 2·81 per cent of the valid votes had been polled in favour of the Jan Sangh in the elections to the State Assemblies. In the Delhi State Assembly elections, the Sangh claims to have secured 20 per cent of the votes. In the subsequent bye-elections to the Delhi State Assembly, the Sangh was more successful. It secured the

more communally conscious Hindu votes through the propaganda of the trained cadre of the RSS. The Sangh seems to have considerable following among Hindus in the Punjab and the Hindu refugees in West Bengal. The Sangh is consistently fishing in the troubled waters of Kashmir though without election results in their favour.

It is said that in 1954, except for leadership, the entire organisation passed into the hands of the RSS. Most of the RSS leaders are now associated with the Jan Sangh. The Jan Sangh claims to have a membership of 400,000 on its rolls.

### The Ram Rajya Parishad

The Ram Rajya Parishad is another party organised by certain high caste orthodox Hindus, mainly in Rajasthan and a few other areas in North India.

As with other Hindu communal parties, achievement of Akhand Hindusthan is primary among its goals. The attractive picture of a mythical golden age of the *Ramayana* epoch, of *Ram Rajya*, is the ideal placed before the electorate. It draws its inspiration from Vedic lore. Its goal is "an Indian India". It strongly disapproves Westernization of India in its political, economic, social and religious ideals.

The Parishad insists on the repeal of all Temple Entry Acts as they "tend to make religious sanctuaries into museums". It considers killing of "cows, monkeys, fish or locusts" as "a sin in itself". In social policies, it is opposed to "the secularised anti-shastric

Hindu Code Bill", for "motherhood is a privilege"; it urges that the joint-family should be kept intact and given prominent place. Its adherence to casteism is evident in its declared policy to give to the members of the Scheduled Castes, "high posts in the management of the sanitary departments of the government" and to place "the leather and hides and allied trades" in their hands. It opposes even the ideal of a classless society, for "classes are like as many limbs of society". The individual must have the "right to earn and the right to own". Property holders should not be deprived of their property without full compensation and seven types of property are not to be confiscated : inheritance, unclaimed treasure, sale proceeds, ransom, lawful interests, income from trade and agriculture and 'dan' allowed in religion. The Parishad is against controls and rationing and nationalisation of trade and industry. The Parishad advocates the restriction of the use of legal tender "in favour of barter".

In most respects the policies of the Parishad are the same as those of the other Hindu communal organisations. Only the Parishad is more conservative and reactionary. It can be said to be the die-hard party of the *status quo*.

The Parishad was able to capture 3 seats from Rajasthan in the Lok Sabha elections out of the 62 contested and secured 1.98 per cent of the total valid votes polled. Out of the 3,280 seats in the various State Assemblies, the Parishad captured 32 seats out of 342 seats contested. It secured 1.21 per cent of the total votes polled in the State elections.

## The Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh

The RSS is perhaps the most disciplined and well-knit and highly organised among the parties in India. Excepting perhaps the Communist Party, no other party evokes such unstinted loyalty and support from among the rank and file of the membership. The RSS has now formally abjured politics from its sphere of activities. But there is no denying the fact that other communal organisations referred to above take their inspiration and philosophy of action from the RSS. Militant Hinduism is its basic ideological inspiration which it imparts to other communal bodies. The RSS is also known as the militant wing of the Hindu Mahasabha. Asok Mehta says : "Hindu communal sentiments, particularly in the towns, articulated through the RSS, rallied together to form the Jan Sangh."

The RSS was founded by Hedgewar of Nagpur in the year 1924. Hedgewar looked through the pages of Indian history and saw the power and splendour attained by the Peshwas, the Brahmin rulers of Maharashtra, in almost all parts of India in the 18th century. The idea of the preservation of Brahmin supremacy inspired him to found the movement as a secret organisation and its aim was to re-establish the Maharashtrian Brahmin supremacy in the fulness of time in the Indian politics by strongly welding together the Hindu masses. The bold and courageous life of Shivaji in his relentless fight against the Moghuls was brought out from the pages of history and the Hindu masses were sought to be consolidated, pointing out to them the common enemy, the

Mussalman. The enchanting cult of anti-Mussalman propaganda and the revival and glorification of the Hindu culture with the ideal of the establishment of Hindu Rashtra of pristine purity was calculated to make a great emotional appeal to the masses. Thus declares Golwalkar : "In fine in Hindusthan, exists and must needs exist the ancient Hindu nation and nought else but the Hindu nation. All those not belonging to the national, i.e., Hindu, race, religion, culture and language naturally fall out of the pale of real national life."

The RSS under Hedgewar never came into conflict with the British, perhaps because communalism suited the British policies. In 1940 the mantle of leadership fell on Golwalkar, affectionately known to his followers as 'Guruji—the Indomitable'. "Till 1940 the Sangh had spread in Maharashtra, Berar, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab. It was after 1940 that the Sangh extended the activities rapidly to all the provinces and places. It not only appealed to and inspired the Hindus to unite, but assured them of their future destiny. The people began to look to it as "a pillar of strength and a stronghold of Hindudom". The RSS under Golwalkar started imparting military training to its strong band of followers. Influenced by the militant ideology of Hitler's Nazi Party in Germany, the RSS developed a peculiar concept of Hindu Nationalism. Like the Nazis, the RSS also tried to capture the loyalty of the teen-agers and the young. The *Bal* and *Sishu* swayam sevaks also were recruited throughout the land for physical and mental training. Answering to the query by the Government of India on the question of taking *pratigna* from minors,

Golwalkar said : "The Sangh aims mainly at the formation of national character. The most formative period is between 14 and 30 years of age. So long as there is no law to regulate the activities of cultural organisations there can be no reason for asking the Sangh not to instruct minors under 18. They are encouraged to take part in outdoor activities of the RSS."

After Gandhiji's assassination the Sangh was declared unlawful by the Government of India. The correspondence between the Government and Golwalkar gives some idea of the character of the RSS. "The gravamen of the charges against the RSS were that it functioned in secrecy, that whatever the professions of its organisers might have been, it derived its main inspiration in the minds of the people from the doctrine of communal hatred, that it exalted a communal Party above the State and that in practice its followers indulged systematically in violence. Incidents have occurred in all provinces and many States where the methods adopted by the Sangh were anything but peaceful and legitimate and where the advancement of the interest of Hindu religion and culture took the form of violence against those who happen to profess some faith other than Hinduism." The Government wrote that they had ample evidence in their possession implicating both the RSS and its members in systematic acts of violence. The Sangh had only an unwritten constitution. But according to the Government "the various committees of the RSS at all levels seem to contain a substantial element of persons who are virtually nominated from above. This is a principle of organisation which is fraught with great danger. In particular the functions of

Sarvasangha Chalak have not been defined. In the interests of democratic working, these functions should be specifically listed and all vestiges of a dictatorial character should be removed". It may be noted that the Sarvasangha Chalak nominates his own successor. In fact the adherence of the RSS to the principle of dictatorship cannot be in doubt. The RSS chief did not budge and continued to "show an obstinate attachment to those very defects in the organisation and functioning of RSS which proved so harmful to the interests of the country". The Government says : "You have carried this attachment to such an extent that you ignore even the patent fact that in key positions in your organisation in every province you have persons belonging to a particular community from a particular area." To the criticism that the membership pledge of the RSS, "the acceptance of life obligation in connection with membership", was "more in common with secret societies than with groups functioning in full public view", the RSS chief answers : "The RSS bases its work upon Hindu culture. In Hindu culture a pledge is always a life obligation and not a temporary contract. If the life pledge is the quality of secret societies only and retrograde, then in the opinion of the Government, Hindu society must be akin to secret society and Hindu culture retrograde in its nature."

The ban against the Sangh was lifted on 12th July 1949 on the assurance of Golwalkar that the Sangh would not take part in politics and that the body would function legally in accordance with the constitution of the Sangh which had been put down in writing. According to the *Hindu* of 22nd July 1949,

Golwalkar said that they had "given up nothing" of their original principles ; he added : "The Government of India wants us to put down in writing our constitution ; we have done so." In his speech at Nagpur on 1st August 1949 he protested that "nobody had a right to ask for the constitution of any organisation". On his release the RSS chief received great ovations and receptions everywhere. K. M. Munshi wrote that they were "an indication that RSS had come to stay. It is no use ignoring the fact". B.B.C. reported that Golwalkar was "the new rising star on the Indian horizon" and observed : "Shri Nehru alone can attract such huge crowds." About the Delhi reception, the *Amrit Bazar Patrika* said : "He came, he saw and he gave every indication that he might conquer."

It was in April 1956 that the RSS chief celebrated his 51st birthday. A gathering of 30,000 people in Delhi presented him with a purse of Rs. 321,151 collected from 450,000 people in the Delhi region. In Poona 50,000 people gathered and gave him a purse of Rs. 282,001. The All-India collections presented to him by the Pratinidhi Sabha of the Sangh totalled Rs. 20,75,000, very close to the target of Rs. 25 lakhs Golwalkar wants for a Hindu revivalist campaign all over the country. Perhaps he has the coming elections in mind.

Trained as he was in the rigorous discipline of *sannyasa* and *yoga*, it is no wonder he casts a magnetic spell on the educated high caste Hindu youth. He calls to something deep and adventurous in the young and his militant organisation which equates itself to a private army, the strong network of branches all

over and its life-long *pratignas*, afford the frustrated youth an arena for significant and purposeful action. The Sangh claims an active membership of more than 500,000 people.

In Poona at the meeting arranged to congratulate him on his 51st birthday the RSS chief spoke in his "benedictory" address : "Now that we are free from foreign rule and that steps are being taken to achieve economic freedom let us endeavour to fight against our religious slavery. Let us invite our non-Hindu brethren into our temples for common worship of our common god." He asserted, "It is a Hindu nation" and "we should strive together as a Hindu nation in the present period of world conflicts. Let us forget our political and other differences". His audience enthusiastically applauded the messiah of national unity under the banner of Hinduism.

He wrote previously : "The non-Hindu peoples in Hindusthan must either adopt Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence the Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture or may stay in the country wholly subordinate to the Hindu nation claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less preferential treatment—not even citizenship rights. There is, at least there should be, no other course for them to adopt." "In this country Hindus alone are the nationals and the Moslems and others if not actually anti-national are at least outside the body of the nation." "We in Hindusthan cannot give up religion in our national life as it would mean that we have turned faithless to our Race Spirit, to the

ideal and mission for which we have lived for ages." "The conclusion is unquestionably forced upon us that in this country, Hindusthan, the Hindu race with its Hindu religion, Hindu culture and Hindu language (the natural family of Sanskrit and her offspring) complete the Nation concept." "Those only are nationalist patriots who with the aspiration to glorify the Hindu race and nation next to their heart are prompted into activity and strive to achieve that goal. All others posing to be patriots and wilfully indulging in a course of action detrimental to the Hindu nation are traitors and enemies to the national cause." In his attempt to prove that everything Hindu is Aryan and that "the Hindu, i.e., Aryan race" was indigenous for over 8 or even 10 thousand years before any foreign invasion and also to compromise the theory of Tilak of the Arctic origin of the Aryan race, Golwalkar propounded the theory that the Arctic home was first in Hindusthan—"that the Arctic home in the Vedas was verily in Hindusthan itself and that it was not the Hindus who migrated to that land but the Arctic zone which emigrated and left the Hindus in Hindusthan".

Golwalkar is opposed to the linguistic redistribution of States in India. He advocates a highly centralised system of government for the country. The latest resolution passed by the Pratinidhi Sabha of the Sangh on the question of Indo-Pakistan disputes advocating a get-tough policy with Pakistan, clearly indicates that the Sangh has staged a definite comeback to active politics.

The Sangh with its strong philosophy of a pure pristine Aryan race destined to form and rule the

Hindu Rashtra, with its stirring call to the deep and emotional aspect in caste Hindu youth, promising them purposeful action and with its fanciful theories and half-truths aggravates considerably the communal fear and strong opposition in the minds of other communities, Hindu and non-Hindu alike. So far as the State is concerned, D. F. Karaka correctly states : "The man with the long black hair (Golwalkar) looks very harmless. But he is the greatest danger to Jawaharlal Nehru, for he is out to destroy the very basis of Nehru's secular State."

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The results of the last General Elections have clearly shown that the Hindu communal parties have failed to carry the electorate with them, excepting perhaps in certain predominantly feudalistic areas in the North where the Parishad promised retention of the *status quo*. The oldest among these parties, the Hindu Mahasabha, fared even worse than in their 1946 performance. The Jan Sangh had better results because of the strong backing it received from the RSS.

With the gradual liquidation of landlordism and other vestiges of feudalism and with the tempo of planned economic development, Hindu communal parties may weaken still further. However with the mounting tension between India and Pakistan and the tenacity of some of the forces of reaction, these communal parties are likely to make a strong bid in the coming elections. The RSS too, which gives the necessary drive, has grown considerably in its influence, and casteism and other traditions which are still

strong in the country are a cultural support. Therefore there is no place for easy optimism.

### COMMUNAL OPPOSITION TO HINDU COMMUNALISM

The natural reaction to Hindu communalism on the part of religious, cultural and linguistic minorities is fear. And fear leads to attitudes of self-defence. The tendency for minority communities to entrench themselves by their own separate communal organisations is a strong one. Even the Scheduled Castes and the non-Brahmins of South India thought it necessary to organise on communal lines to protect themselves against the Brahmin domination of Hindu communalism. Communalism of one kind breeds and develops its counterpart in another. There are in India today a number of these parties which are communal oppositions to Hindu communalism. The All-India Muslim League, Madras, the Akali Party of the Sikhs, the Dravida Kazhagam in the South are instances to the point.

There may be an initial motive of justice and legitimate self-protection in such minority communal organisations. But too soon they become aggressive and perverted. This perversion is inherent in the very nature of communal organisations, whether of majority or minority ; and they destroy the peace and the unity of the nation, and weaken national development. Communalism also incapacitates the several communities from making their contributions to the common good.

## The All-India Muslim League, Madras

This is the remnant in India of the original All-India Muslim League.

The League was formally founded in 1906 at Dacca. As has already been stated, their main objective was "to protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Mussalmans of India and to respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to the Government and to prevent the rise among them of any feelings of hostility towards other communities". In 1909 the League succeeded in making the Government accept the principle of communal award and communal representation. In 1913 the League adopted a new constitution with the object of "the protection of the rights of the Muslims, and without detriment to the foregoing object, the attainment of the system of self-government suitable to India". Jinnah said that the principle on which the organisation was based was the "retention of the Muslim communal individuality, strong and unimpaired in every constitutional readjustment that might be made in India in all the course of its political evolution".

After a brief period of mutual understanding and concord, the League and the Congress moved entirely on different and very often on conflicting lines. They came to represent two main sentiments in the country—nationalism and communalism. The former was organisationally expressed through the Congress and the most powerful expression of communalism was the League. The League denied the right of the Congress to speak on behalf of the Muslim. In 1940 the

League propounded the two-nation theory and it routed the nationalist Muslims in the 1946 elections. With the creation of Pakistan in 1947 the League was split into two, the Pakistan Muslim League and the Indian Muslim League.

The League in India today is a very small political party and its activity is confined to the State of Madras. The bulk of the supporters of the old League have either gone over to the Congress or do not enter into active politics. The League has only one representative from Madras in the Lok Sabha and a strength of five in the Madras State Assembly.

The League has practically no future in India in view of the system of joint electorates. According to a recent utterance of Prime Minister Nehru: "We blamed the Muslim League for communalism. Now the League is finished in India." But the President of the League, Mohamed Ismail, wants to keep the League alive to represent the Muslim minority in India. He states that as long as the Indian National Congress functions as a political party the League also will have to be active. It is distressing to note that the League has been revived in Malabar and gained some success in the local elections there. The considerable success of the RSS in organising its branches and enrolling members in Malabar perhaps accounts for the revival of the League's activity there.

In a larger perspective the revival of this communal organisation is bound to defeat the very purpose it seeks to serve.

The Shia Political Conference, the Momin Amar Conference, the All-India Muslim Majlis and Jamiat-

Ul-Ulema Hind are other small political organisations of Muslims, the last being an organisation of Muslim divines and religious teachers. All these strongly support the Congress in its political programme and activities. But the wisdom of their continuance as political organisations in spite of their nationalistic outlook is open to question. It is understood that latterly Jamaiat-Ul-Ulema Hind has ceased to be a political body.

### The Scheduled Castes Federation

The Federation aims at organising the vast number of Depressed Class Hindus into a political organisation on an All-India basis. It is one among the older parties in India. Its founder and unquestioned leader is Ambedkar. During the British days it used to make very extraordinary claims and demands. The object of the Federation now is the attainment by the Scheduled Castes of a status equal to that of the high caste Hindus in all walks of life. It also attempts to keep a record of the instances of tyranny and oppression committed on the Scheduled Castes by the caste Hindus. Ambedkar who is a profound scholar and constitutional authority, quite often gives free vent to his feelings of frustration and indulges in powerful onslaughts on "the caste Hindu Congress" and threatens to leave the Hindu fold with his entire followers. Among the proclaimed principles and programmes of the Party are: social equality among men; the individual as an end in himself and the State as the means; preference for parliamentary government. The general aim of the Party is to establish a social democracy and impart to

every citizen a sense of dignity and self-respect which is to be accomplished through peaceful means. The lot of the backward classes is to be raised socially, economically and politically. Poverty is to be eradicated by effectively checking the growth of population and properly husbanding the resources of the community, priority being given to planning.

The Party succeeded in getting 2 seats out of the 34 contested for the House of the People and 2 in the Council of States with a record of 2.3 per cent of the total valid polled votes in its favour. In the different State Assemblies it has a total strength of 12 seats out of which 5 are in the Hyderabad Assembly. It contested altogether 241 seats. It polled in its favour 1.74 per cent of the total valid votes recorded for the State Assembly elections. In the 1954 elections to the Andhra Assembly the Federation won 2 seats. These election results show that the Federation has made some gain since their performance in the 1946 elections.

But it can justifiably be said that the Party has failed to adapt itself and grow in the new situation. Organised mainly on the basis of the grievances of the Scheduled Castes against the high caste Hindus and without much positive content in its philosophy and programme of action, the Party may not have much future in the new political set-up of the country. But it can have a definite contribution in the social and cultural field, fighting against the age-long casteism that proved so baneful to the interests of the Scheduled Castes in the past.

## The Dravida Kazhagam and The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam

The Dravidistan Movement has been rocking the foundations of political life in South India for many years. The Movement is particularly powerful in Tamilnad. Its leader is E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker or Periyar to his devoted followers. The Dravida Kazhagam is the spearhead of the Dravidistan Movement. The Movement professes to stand for carving out a separate sovereign State independent of the Central Government for people speaking the Dravidian languages and belonging to the ancient and glorious Dravidian culture as distinct from the Aryan culture. The intransigent bid for a separate sovereign Dravidian State, the anti-Hindi Movement as well as the programme of violent demonstrations like stopping of trains, etc., have robbed the Movement of a sense of reality and vested it with a melodramatic character.

The Brahmins of the South had for ages made themselves an exclusive and dominating caste having had the least social contact with the rest of the people.

In the second decade of this century, two movements of anti-Brahmin revolt sprang up in the province of Madras. One was led by wealthy influential non-Brahmins smarting under the injustice practised by the superior Brahmins. This was known as the Justice Party. And the other was a one-man movement of the common folk to pull down the Brahmin from his pedestal. Because it aimed to create a sense of self-respect among the low caste and outcaste in

village and small town, it was called the Self-Respect Movement.

The non-Brahmin members from the South in the Congress maintained that the conflict was between the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins. The idea gained ground that the non-Brahmin interests were no longer safe in the hands of the Congress as the Brahmins dominated the Congress though they comprised only 5 per cent of the population. E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, who was holding responsible posts in the Congress, left it and started the Self-Respect Movement in 1925.

The Communal G.O. and the Government under the Raja of Panagal were the achievements of the Justice Party in Madras.

The Self-Respect Movement and the Justice Party worked together, the Justice Party in power being more concerned with retaining political power in non-Brahmin hands and the Self-Respect Movement campaigning for a radical reform, in the religious, social and civic life of the people. It thundered denunciation of religious beliefs and of the sanctions of religion to a social life ridden with strong caste prejudices. Reason was the infallible and final criterion of all judgment and religion being beyond the realm of demonstrable proof, was ridiculed by the Self-Respecter.

The Movement had a passion for social justice and campaigned for social equality and abolition of caste and urged utilitarian and humanitarian standards in the use of wealth.

The Movement also championed the cause of labour interests both from platforms and through the various journals. It can be said that these movements considerably helped non-Brahmins take up the leadership of the Congress since 1935 in the South Indian States. The Self-Respect Movement actively supported the Justice Party in the election campaign, but the Party was routed by the Congress in the 1937 elections as the Justice Party was known as the hand-maid of the British. After the Congress came to power, the Movement opposed the introduction of Hindi as a compulsory subject in schools and carried on an agitation till the Congress Government in Madras made it an optional subject.

The idea of a separate sovereign State for Dravidians, free from Aryan domination, was conceived in 1938. From 1944 onwards the demand for a separate sovereign Dravidanad became a fundamental issue and the Party's programme was built around it. The basic presuppositions were that the Dravidian non-Brahmins (Tamil, Telugus, Kannadigas and Malayalis occupying Dravidanad) were of a different racial stock and that they had a culture of their own distinguishable from that of the Aryan Brahmin. In 1944 the Party's name was changed to Dravida Kazhagam. The Party also proclaimed its opposition to the continuance of the British in the land and called upon its members to renounce all titles conferred by the British, and to resign from all offices connected with the National War Front. This enhanced the prestige of the Party considerably. The Party ceased to be a handmaid of the British, a criticism levelled against it during the 1937 elections. Consequent to the depar-

ture of the upper strata from the Party, it resorted to cultural programmes such as the staging of plays as a means of raising funds and of propaganda. It encouraged many young men to write and to stage plays and thus enrich the literature and in a way a renaissance in Tamil literature was ushered in by the programme of the Party.

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam was established in 1949 by Annadurai, a close disciple of E. V. R. But the programmes of the two branches differed very little. Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam claims today 650 branches and a membership of 60,000.

In the 1952 elections the Party did not set up candidates but pledged their support to any candidate who offered to work for the achievement of Dravidistan. Candidates belonging to several parties won the Kazhagam's support and consequently the election. The Communists also took advantage of the canalising of communal impulses by the Kazhagam. The parties which came up solely as the result of the Kazhagam support are the Tamilnad Toilers Party and the Commonwealth Party.

This communal movement is an important factor to be reckoned with in South India. Communalism always breeds more aggressive communalism. The strong religious revivalist movements like the RSS, etc., find their counterpart, their inverted image, in the Dravidistan Movement.

In its violent programme of stopping of trains to achieve its political ends, the Movement exhibits, as

Nehru says, a "tribal mentality" and on its general attitude, it constitutes a danger to the unity of the country though there is no denying the fact that the Kazhagam, by its various programmes, contributed much to the awakening of the self-respect of the non-Brahmin masses of South India. Its contribution to South Indian Tamil literature is substantial. On the question of the creation of Dakshina Pradesh, the Kazhagam carried through a programme of hartal against Kerala merging with Tamilnad. This has clearly shown that the movement has wholly changed into a Tamil State movement.

It is reported that the Munnetra Kazhagam is to contest the General Elections on the issue of Dravidistan.

### The Sikh Parties

There are three main parties among the Sikhs and the chief among them is the Shiromani Akali Dal led by Master Tara Singh who is also its president. Besides the Akali Dal, there is the Khalsa Dal which consists of a large body of Sikhs who follow the Congress or conform to the Congress outlook. The strength of the groups cannot be definitely assessed as it fluctuates with the changing fortunes in the Punjab. Between these two parties exist an older party—the Chief Khalsa Divan of the nationalistic Sikhs. These three parties have confined their activities to East Punjab and PEPSU area. Outside the Punjab, the central Sikh Federation functions from Delhi. The Akali Dal works for maintaining the separate identity of the Sikh community. The Akali Dal has been quite vociferous in its opposition to the merger of the two states.

ferous in its demand for a separate homeland for Sikhs with Punjabi as the official language—for Punjabi Suba. In the Gurudwara elections, Shiromani Akali Dal swept the polls, proving its unquestioned sway over the Sikh masses. In 1955 the Akali Dal organised a number of marches of Sikhs to strengthen their demand for a Punjabi Suba. According to the *Tribune* from the Punjab, Master Tara Singh even went to the extent of contacting Pakistan on some kind of exchange of Gurudwara property and to complain to Pakistan of the Government of India deliberately obstructing a settlement between the Sikh community and West Punjab (Pakistan) on the question of places of worship and also to offer a plan, making common cause with the Muslim community, who were depicted as suffering persecution at the hands of the Government of India. This wantonly childish performance caused deep estrangement between the communities, and the Hindu communal parties, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Jan Sangh and the Parishad, took full advantage of the situation and made a demand for a Maha Punjab Front consisting of PEPSU, East Punjab and Himachal Pradesh where a Hindu majority is assured.

The Government of India's plan for reorganisation of the Punjab and PEPSU with regional and bilingual emphasis evolved after long discussion with Akali Dal has now been accepted by Shiromani Akali Dal, the Congress and the nationalist Sikhs, the chief Khalsa Divan and the Khalsa Dal. All the exclusively Hindu parties strongly disapprove the Plan and have declared their intention to oppose the same. Both the Jan Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha have already broken up the opposition

coalition front in the Punjab Assembly which they formed with Akali Dal after the last elections.

The central Akali Party holds 4 seats in the House of the People, 2 from Punjab and 2 from PEPSU. In the PEPSU State Assembly in the 1952 elections the Akalis secured a strength of 19 seats which was subsequently reduced to 12 in the 1954 elections. The Akali Dal has also a strength of about 13 seats in the East Punjab Assembly. The Akali Dal has considerable influence among the Sikh masses, especially in view of the working of the Hindu communal parties in the area. Without strong Hindu-Sikh unity in that border area, the Punjab will continue to be a hotbed of intrigues and tension and hence a weak link in the chain. The present proposals give the Sikhs a certain constitutional majority area which has satisfied them for the time being. What the future holds for that area is difficult to say in view of the fact that the Maha Punjab Front have rejected the Government of India's scheme of regional standing committees for the future set-up of the Punjab. The Front, consisting of the Hindu communal bodies, have rejected the plan on the ground that it would "accentuate communal differences and exacerbate caste cleavages". They rejected the very conception of zones on a communal basis.

The future demands of the Sikh communal parties in addition to a homeland are:

1. There must be adequate weightage for Sikhs in the Indian Parliament as in the case of Anglo-Indians.

2. Cognisance must be taken of the migrations in U.P. and Delhi. In U.P. there are 500,000 Sikhs and in Delhi about 100,000.

3. The question of the Gurudwaras left behind in Pakistan must be taken up by the Government of India with Pakistan. The Nankana Sahib Gurudwara in Pakistan should be created a free city like the Vatican and other Gurudwaras in Pakistan should be administered by the Nankana Sahib authorities.

4. All the Sikh refugees, no matter where they come from (and according to the Sikhs, 40 per cent of their community are refugees), should be accommodated in the Punjab. This will provide a homeland for the Sikhs in India.

The Sikhs also want the Government of India to recognise their sufferings in the cause of undivided India, their contribution to the defence services and the fact that the community is distributed on the strategic borders of India. All that the Sikhs need is opportunity to reconstruct their homeland and thus work out their prosperity as they did in the old Punjab. Further, the Shiromani Akali Dal, "in view of the lack of real nationalism in the country, considers it extremely vital for the Sikhs to have a separate political body as one of their fundamental and constitutional rights to protect Sikh unity". The Akali Dal also claims that its ultimate aim is the nationalisation of essential sources of production and equitable division of profits. Divergent views are kept together in the Party as the Party itself is a political amalgam of highly sectarian views and certain general radical aims.

An interesting incident happened the other day which throws considerable light on the working of communal parties. It was brought to light that the Akali Dal made a demand on the Government of India that all promotions of Sikh officers in the Defence Services should be made after prior consultations with the *Granthies* (priests of the community) to make sure that the Sikh officers observed their obligatory religious practices. The Prime Minister rejected the demand on the ground that a secular State could not forcibly keep any citizen in the Sikh religion just as it could not forcibly effect religious conversions.

Communalism of any breed, whether Hindu, Sikh or any other, constitutes a reversal of democratic and secular values adopted by the State. It does not hesitate to invade the freedom of the citizen and even to resort to actions which might impair the security of the nation.

### The Naga Movement

The Naga Movement is another irritating factor in the Indian polity today. The Nagas inhabit a vast tract of land that stretches into both Burma and India. There are about thirty tribes among the Nagas, having different dialects, religious practices and customs. But they all share something in common which regulates their aspirations. With the establishment of British rule in the Naga Hills, Christian Missions also started work there. Foreigners inhabiting the area were influencing the culture and mode of life of the indigenous population in various ways. Even during the British days, as a result of the discontent of the

people, there were insurrections. These insurrections were directed against foreign domination.

The cry of "independent Nagaland Dominion" started when the Simon Commission came.

During the Second World War, the Nagas and their present leader Zepu Phizo helped the INA under Subhas Bose and identified themselves with the general cause of India's freedom from bondage. From the INA example they received tremendous inspiration. The birth of Pakistan fired their imagination to create a "sovereign independent Nagaland" as a buffer State on the borders of India, Burma and China. The Naga National Council captured all the 25 tribal councils set up by the Government and thus came to control a big slice of governmental machine. After the transfer of power to India the Naga National Council formulated the demand for recognition of the "sovereign independence" of Nagaland by the Government of India and the UNO. In 1952 the Naga National Council boycotted the elections to the Council and the Assam Legislature. Not a single inhabitant of the Naga Hills filed nomination papers.

The Government of India has been prepared to grant the substance of autonomy and opportunities for free development to the Naga tribes within the Indian Union. And the joint tour of the Prime Ministers of India and Burma of the affected areas of both countries had some salutary effect. But it did not prove to be one of lasting value. The Nagas have again become turbulent. A few of the Nagas have seen the mistake of running after the mirage of separatist

independence and since then there has been a shift in the Naga National Council. But some of them were executed by the "people's courts" set up by the extremist section of the Council.

As law and order have been challenged, the district has been declared a disturbed area and the military and police are having joint operations with some success.

The demands of the Nagas have a familiar ring—very similar to the demands of communal minorities beginning with the Muslim League. Political organisations having as their exclusive basis the religion or the culture of a section of the people will ultimately deify themselves and strike at the unity and solidarity of the entire State. Beginning with protection of legitimate rights and self-defence, they end by not allowing any room for inclusive interests and superior national and human loyalties.

### Indian Christian Associations

Indian Christians on the whole have exhibited sound political sense in refusing any special privileges or rights as a community, to be engrafted into the Constitution. As a matter of fact the Draft Constitution did contain certain provisions specifying the rights of the Christian and other minority religious communities as political minorities. The Indian Christian leaders did not want special communal safeguards. This lead was followed by some of the other communities also. The Christian community did well in recognising the supreme fact that the future of the

minorities lay in believing in the good sense of the majority community and throwing in their lot with non-sectarian democratic political parties.

There is however one distressing feature in the politics of the Indian Christian community today. During the British days there were organisations called Indian Christian Associations. The Associations were organised mainly for the purpose of awakening the political sense of the community and to align them on the side of the national movement. In those days when the principle of communal representation was recognised, they fought against the principle and helped to bring a sense of nationalism to the election of Christian representatives. The Associations did earn the commendation of national leaders in the days of the struggle.

After the achievement of independence, the existence of the Associations became unnecessary as there was no communal electorate. They became practically defunct. Latterly, the challenge of other communal parties including the RSS, and the fear of the huge Hindu majority in the Congress and the propaganda against Christian missions, have set some among the leaders to move in the direction of reviving the Indian Christian Associations to play a new role—as the spearhead of the agitation for safeguarding the political and religious rights of the community. This move is to be condemned both from a larger angle as well as from the point of view of the community itself. The move to revive this communal organisation will betray the best interests of the community. It will be a denial of its faith that the basic

human rights of the citizen irrespective of caste, creed and colour are best safeguarded by the community throwing its lot wholeheartedly with non-sectarian parties which uphold the same, in spite of the hurdles and initial obstacles it has to overcome. That the Christian community had its confidence well placed was fully proved in the fate of the Indian Converts (Registration and Regulation) Bill in the Parliament.

There is still a peculiar feature in the attitude of certain sections of the Christians in Travancore-Cochin. The Christians form one-third of the population and are highly advanced and politically conscious. The community does support the non-sectarian political parties of the State, but with some qualification. Several of the professedly non-political cultural organisations of the community claiming to speak for the community effect political alliances with the Congress and other parties prior to the elections. These organisations insist on their own candidates being chosen as the official candidates of the party with which the alliance is effected. No doubt, the Christian community is not alone in this kind of behaviour. It has however led to a good deal of deterioration in the purity of the national organisations in the country. Perhaps these deals by political parties with communal organisations in a way account for the now notorious political instability of the State.

In the context of today's politics, and the prevailing fear of the minorities regarding their religious freedom and citizenship rights, organisations like the Civil Liberties Union are called for, to safeguard the fundamental rights of the citizen guaranteed under

the Constitution. In this the enlightened Christians along with fellow-citizens should take the lead. Christian leaders have always affirmed that minority communities should not demand any right other than human rights and that they are best procured and safeguarded by non-sectarian forces. There is no reason why this sound approach to political life should be given up.

## Evaluation

The picture that emerges from a discussion of the Communal Parties and their programmes is in a way conflicting and confusing. On one side we have the caste Hindu communal parties making a strong bid with their Hindu Rashtravad as opposed to the secular State. On the other we have the picture of the Sikh parties and the Dravida Kazhagam, out of their professed fear of the aggrandisement of the strong self-interested caste Hindu majority, seeking to carve out separate homelands for themselves. The Scheduled Caste Federation was organised mainly out of their constant dread of casteism and caste superiority. The inevitable development of any communal organisation was shown by the growth of the Muslim League based on the very "hostility to other communities" which it was the aim of the League to "prevent" at the beginning. The remnant of the League is still functioning in the country though in a weak form, to agitate for the separate claims of the Muslim community and safeguard its rights. It is quite clear that if left to these communal and sectarian parties, the country would turn out to be a veritable hotbed of warring communities mutually exclusive and growing suspicious

of each other and losing in the process the hard-won unity of the country. There is nothing more precious to preserve in the country today than its unity and solidarity. Nehru in the course of a trenchant criticism of Hindu communal parties condemned them for their attempts to revive a mentality which had in the past caused ruin to the country. At the present time in India, unity is the most essential for the economic building up and therefore casteism and communalism are to be condemned. Hindu society is divided into castes and sub-castes, each claiming superiority over the others. Besides, there are large numbers of untouchables in Hindu society. In such circumstances the cry of Hindu Rashtra is absolutely meaningless and only tends to create more disunity in the ranks of Hindu society itself. The cry will only take back the country "to strife, misery and disunity".

Hindu society, forming more than 80 per cent of the nation, will have to play a great role in shaping the future of the country. For this great and historical role, "the Hindus should transform themselves from an unorganised mass of ill-defined social groups". Contact with Western thought, mass political activity under Gandhiji's leadership, secular education and the exposure of many irrational beliefs have created new social urges in Hindu society requiring effective social legislation for the amelioration of social conditions. In a rapidly changing world, Hindu society alone cannot remain static, satisfied with the picture of a golden epoch of the past. Social awakening of the masses demand social legislation of a revolutionary character. The customs and practices that divide man from man and confer inequality of status by birth and

those that deny elementary rights to women have to go. The Hindu Marriage Act and other enactments aimed at reforming the Hindu Code are necessary pieces of legislation which the society calls for. The attempt of the communal parties to stem this tide of social awakening by their theory "that ancient customs and religious conviction, hoary with age, should never be interfered with lightly or seriously" and that the changes constituted "a far-reaching revolutionary sacrilege on their *dharma*", is both pitiable and reprehensible.

It was the tradition of religious toleration embedded in the Indian mind which made the acceptance of the idea of secular State easy for the vast majority of people when the New India was born. The Constitution sets up a secular State which does not place in a position of advantage or preference any particular religious group, including the majority religion, but treats all with tolerance and equal sympathy. The Constitution opens with a magnificent enumeration of the fundamental rights of the individual citizen. His right to choose the means which he considers suitable for his perfection is made justiciable. His right to religious freedom involves his right to reject any or all religions. The Constitution abolishes untouchability and provides the minorities with ample safeguards for their religious and cultural rights. The rule of law is made superior to the will of the majority and sanguine provisions are made to safeguard the fundamental rights against immolation, by "democratic totalitarianism" and "majority tyranny". These principles derive their strength from the fact that they are universally valid. Though the Constitution itself may be

said to have been modelled on the Constitutions of the Western Democracies, it has its roots deep in the soil of the land. It bases its concepts on the sanctity of man and his spiritual destiny which have been embedded in Indian thought for ages.

The Hindu communal parties are at war with this Constitution. They condemn the Constitution as "not suited the genius of the people" and want to "amend it".

In their opposition to the Constitution and to the concept of the secular State and the consequences that flow from it, the communal political parties are in fact betraying the more valuable traditions of the country and making themselves unworthy of support. By their programmes based on semi-feudalist notions of property and unrestricted private enterprise, these parties have forfeited their right to the nation's confidence. Their proclaimed defence policy to make the country a first rank military power with strong measures against Pakistan, sets at nought the foreign policy of the country based on the culture of the nation and applauded by all peace-loving countries in the world.

The communalism they advocate makes the development of the infant democracy of the country and its economic policy very difficult. Communal divisions and democracy can never go together. Two vital problems are raised by the communal parties. First, Indian democracy in the present institutional form on a nation-wide scale is imported and yet we have to find

and develop its roots in the native soil. The communal parties affirm that "the misconceived notion of secular democracy cannot inspire the masses". We may argue that it is well conceived ; but we have to agree that it has not yet found an emotional means of appeal. The Congress President recently said that "the political institutions Britain had set up in India had no roots in the life of the people" and therefore they lacked dynamic. The benefits of the democratic way of life will certainly supply eventually the necessary emotional stimulus to work for democratic socialism.

The other serious danger posed by the communal parties is the infiltration of communal anti-secular ideas into the working of non-sectarian political parties in the country. Someone said the other day that there was more communalism and casteism in the Congress "than possibly in any other organisation in India". This is no doubt an exaggeration, but it is quite possible that more and more reactionary communalists will come into the Congress and other non-sectarian parties with lip loyalties. The communal parties definitely offer a challenge in this respect to the other political parties to purify their ranks and strictly enforce conditions to retain the secular character of the parties. The alternative is fraught with serious danger to the nation.

Asok Mehta says that in any future election the "communal parties are expected to lose steadily" because of social and economic legislation adopted by the nation. The results of the last General Elections definitely strengthen this optimism. But frustrated communalism will easily find other paths for a comeback.

Referring to the havoc already brought on the nation by the communalists, Prime Minister Nehru said recently : "Let us not try this dangerous trick again and bring disunity amongst ourselves and lose our hard-won freedom. This should be a warning to every Indian." We would underline these words. The people should refuse to give any quarter to communal parties in the political life of the nation.

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## 6

## The Communist Party

### Historical Background

LIKE most other leading parties in India today, the Communists also were, in the early years, closely associated with the National Congress. It was but natural that the success of the communist revolution in Russia should have kindled the imagination and changed the outlook of the younger and more rebellious section of the national movement. Perhaps, it may also be remarked that the Bolshevik leaders of Russia were the first to gauge the strength and possibility of the working class movement in India. As early as 1908, when even the most sympathetic Western observer overlooked the Indian working class, Lenin remarked that "the Indian Proletariat has *already* matured sufficiently to wage a class-conscious political mass struggle."

The success of the proletarian revolution in Russia had led a section of the National Congress to believe in Marxism. This eventually inspired the development of both the Socialist and the Communist parties. The Socialist and Communist elements considerably influenced the character and policies of the Indian National Congress. It was due to their influence that the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress in 1931 included in their goals the principles of economic democracy. Since the Congress as a whole did

not accept the principle of class struggle, the Communists turned to the task of bringing class consciousness into the ranks of workers, peasants and the intelligentsia.

To a large extent the policies of the Indian Communist Party were guided by the development in International Communism. Following the instructions of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, the Indian Communist Party adopted the policy of the united front with Socialists within the Congress, between the years 1936 and 1939. When war broke out in 1939 it characterised the war as an "imperialist war" in the same way as the Communist International and criticised the indecisive character of the opposition of the Congress and the Socialists to the war effort in India. It was at this time that they broke away from the united front taking with them the whole of the Socialist group in the south.

Russia's entry into the War in 1941 changed the whole situation. For the Communists the war suddenly changed from an "imperialist war" into a "people's war", and they began to support the war effort. But by now the Congress was moving towards the decision to resist the war efforts. The Government under the circumstances, lifted the ban on the Communist Party and encouraged its activities, in large measure to counter the influence of the Congress whose leaders were arrested during their 1942 "Quit India" movement.

Now the Communist Party alone was free; other parties were all within stone walls and behind iron

bars. The Party made the best use of the situation, specially to intensify its activities among the workers, peasants and students. The membership of the Party grew rapidly from 4,000 in July 1942 to 15,000 in May 1943, 30,000 in January 1944 and over 55,000 by the summer of 1946. This mass contact that the Party made was one of its greatest achievements and enabled it to be the second best political organisation in the country in the years to come. In 1945 when the Congress leaders were released, they branded the Communists as traitors to the country and sought to expel them from the Congress. Before they were expelled, however, they resigned. Still they continued to work for Congress-League-Communist Unity as the means to national independence. During the elections of 1946 the Communist Party contested the elections but it had little success against the forces of nationalism and religious communalism.

"Ideological Conflicts" now crept into the Party. The Joshi group pleaded for soft-pedalling of the revolutionary programme of the Party on the ground that the country was not yet "ripe" for socialism. On the other hand, Ranadive and followers insisted upon the militant policy of violent action. Then came partition and independence. The turn of events soon after independence, led to the acceptance, in practice at any rate, of Joshi's old policy of limited co-operation with the Congress, especially in meeting the communal riots.

However, events at home and abroad made the Party restart the ideological debate. At home the Party's influence among the workers and peasants was

increasing and the All-India Trade Union Congress was controlled by the Party. The more important factor came from outside. September 1947 saw the founding of the Cominform in Poland with the Soviet emphasis on the division of the world into two hostile camps—that of Imperialism led by Britain and America, and that of “Democracy” led by the Soviet Union and the People’s Democracies of Eastern Europe. A series of consultations and discussions were held and the Second Congress of the Communist Party of India held at Calcutta in 1948 made a final decision criticising Joshi and his “right deviation”. Joshi lost his leadership and even his place in the Central Committee. Ranadive became the Secretary of the Party.

The new strategy was set forth in detail in a *Political Thesis* published in July 1948. The Thesis called for the formation of a democratic front under communist leadership of the working class, the peasantry and the progressive intelligentsia for an all-out effort to usher in the people’s revolution. It was in the light of this that the “era of terrorism” started in many parts of the country, especially in Telengana in Hyderabad. The Central and State Governments accepted this communist challenge and decided to meet strength with strength. The Central Government arrested many of the leaders of the Party and the Party was banned in several States. Military action in Telengana drove the Communists into the jungles. The Party lost its popular sympathy. The starting of the Indian National Trade Union Congress by the Congress Party and the Hind Mazdoor Sabha by the Socialists considerably weakened the Communist hold on the trade union movement. Terrorism had failed.

The Party's fortune was at a very low ebb. It was during this period that the principle of "democratic centralism" worked out its logic within the Party and betrayed itself to many even within the Party as naked dictatorship.

It was at this time that new hope came from China. The victory of the Communists in China and the establishment of the People's Republic, along with the recognition granted to the new regime even by the Government of India, led the Communists to turn their eyes from Moscow to Peking for a pattern of revolution in India. China presented a very close parallel to India. Both were semi-feudal agrarian countries launching out on industrialisation. Hence a new enthusiasm to imitate the Chinese pattern developed in the minds of the Indian Communists. For instance, in 1949 the Andhra secretariat of the Party published an analysis of the Indian situation in which they challenged the right of the proletarian group to dictate to the peasants, at least during the initial stages of the revolution. Quoting the Chinese experience, they advocated a policy which would modify the armed struggle to permit co-operation with well-to-do peasants and middle bourgeois in their fight against feudalism and Big Business. The Politbureau, however, rejected this new trend as "reformism in its most naked and gross form". They refused to accept Mao as a high-priest of orthodox Communism along with Marx, Lenin and Stalin.

But this rejection was not to be final. In January 1950 the Cominform recommended the Chinese pattern for India and Ranadive made a last minute

attempt to accept the new line. The Party members, however, insisted upon his resignation and the re-organisation of the Politbureau. Rajeswar Rao from Andhra was made the Secretary. He was also expelled in October 1951 and Ajoy Ghosh became the General Secretary.

The Party now started getting busy about the elections of 1951-52. Its statement of policy said that the Party "regards as quite mature the task of replacing the present anti-democratic and anti-popular government, by a new government, of People's Democracy". It made another pronouncement also : "The main question is not whether there is to be armed struggle or not, the main question is not whether it is to be non-violent or violent. It is the reactionary ruling classes who resort to force and violence against the people and who pose for us the question whether our creed is violence or non-violence. Marxism and history have once for all decided the question for the Party and the people of every country in the world long ago. All action of the masses in defence of their interest to achieve their liberation is sacrosanct. History sanctions all that the people decide to do to clear the lumber-load of decadence and reaction in their path to progress and freedom."

It was further made explicit that the aim of the Party was to rout the Congress at the polls. For instance, the Election Manifesto of the Party ended with the slogan : "All to the polls

- to rout the Congress.
- to make the people's candidates victorious.
- to establish a people's government."

The actual election promises and the declaration of future programme were not to be of any significance at all. "Any action in the interests of the masses", summed up the election manifesto of the Party.

With the sole aim of defeating the Congress Government, the Party went round seeking allies in this "popular" programme. It had no scruples in the matter of choosing allies. It was prepared even to dilute essentials of its own programme. Alliances were all *ad hoc* without any uniform principle. The allies ranged from Gandhian parties like KMP to Marxist parties like the Forward Bloc ; from sectarian parties like the Dravida Kazhagam to local parties like the Kerala Socialist Party. This united front tactics was the main policy of the Party during and after the elections.

During the elections the Communists won 26 seats out of 489 in the House of the People and 173 seats out of a total of 3,280 in the State Legislatures, thereby also emerging as the principal Opposition in the Union Parliament, and in the States of Madras, Hyderabad, West Bengal and Travancore-Cochin. However, in terms of the percentage of the total votes cast, their strength was less than that of the Socialists and roughly equal to that of the KMP.

### Since the 1951-52 Elections

The main line of the Party during the elections was to single out the ruling party as "anti-democratic and anti-popular", as "protecting the landlords, money-lenders and other exploiters against the people", as

being "under the influence of imperialist war mongers, landlords and profiteers", as having "betrayed our freedom struggle" and as having allowed "the foreigners and the reactionary Indian vested interests to plunder and loot our people, themselves joining in the loot"; and to champion the cause of the people, of freedom and of peace under a "Government of People's Democracy" on the basis of a "coalition of all democratic, anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces in the country". Thus the Party made out that the overthrow of the Congress was a national need for which all democrats had to get together. This was the basis of the United Democratic Front. The Party approached other parties with a "minimum programme", which it claimed should be acceptable to any "progressive party". On the basis of this minimum programme, alliances were made to avoid triangular fights. The presence of a number of parties whose main issue was their grievances against the Congress—the KMP being the best illustration—enabled the Party in many places to form an anti-Congress Front. After the elections the Party used the same technique to attempt to form governments in States where the Congress failed to get absolute majority, and where a leftist unity, if achieved, would have been in a position to take up the government. The best illustration for this policy was Madras. In Madras the Congress won 152 seats out of a total of 375. The Communists had 62 seats, the KMP 35, the Krishikar Lok Party of Ranga 15. There were also one or two local sectarian parties with a few seats and over 60 independents. The Party with the support of T. Prakasam, who fell an easy victim to its praises and promises, made an attempt to form a "coalition of progressive-minded

M.L.A.'s to replace the reactionary Congress regime". The Party was prepared to go to any extent to come to power in this way. The only demand of the Party was a few seats in the cabinet—not even the chief ministership of the State. And probably, the United Democratic Front would have come to power but for other manœuvres, the merits of which need not be examined here. What is important is to see what happened to this and other similar "fronts".

In Madras, the Front did not last for more than a few months. It failed to act as a united opposition to the Congress. Partly this was the result of the policies of the Chief Minister, Rajaji, who singled out the Communists as his "Enemy No. 1" and directed all his attacks against them, ignoring the U.D.F. But soon Prakasam and Tenneti Viswanathan and other leaders of the Front realised the dominating and subtle policies of the Communist Party and the Front died a natural though premature death.

In Travancore-Cochin a United Leftist Front of Communists, Revolutionary Socialists and Kerala Socialists was formed before the elections. After the elections the UFL made a bid to form a Leftist ministry with the support of the Socialists. But it failed. And soon there arose factions within the Front. The secretary of the Kerala Socialist Party openly accused the Communists of trying to dominate the Front. He was followed by the RSP leader, Sreekantan Nair, who denounced the attempt of the Communists to draw in right wing individuals and reactionary groups in a final effort to form the ministry. He also pointed out that the minimum programme of the Front was much less progressive than that of the Congress.

The Party succeeded in forming a People's Democratic Front in Hyderabad whose leader, N. M. Jaisoorya, accused the Party in less than a year's time of exploiting the Front for Party ends.

Thus ended the experiment of the united front of parties till it was of late revived as the Democratic Front of the masses which will be dealt with later in the chapter.

### Policies of the Party

We must now turn to the policies of the Party in different fields.

(i) PEASANTS. Reference has already been made in the historical review about the changing attitude of the Party to the peasant problem in India. At first the Party paid little attention to the peasantry because of the disregard of the peasant class in traditional Communist theory. Then came the comparison of the Indian situation to the Chinese and the adoption of the partisan war of the peasantry as the main weapon of the Party. It was under the influence of this policy that peasants of Telengana were directed to take arms against the landlords and the Government. But the Policy Statement of November 1951 considered this policy to be based on a wrong understanding of the lessons of the Chinese revolution. It also pointed out the differences between the Indian and Chinese situations. In China, Communism had the Liberation Army, the communication facilities were poor rendering it difficult for the Government to combat Communist terrorism, and above all,

Chinese Communists had "the great friendly Soviet Union in the rear". In all these respects the Indian situation was different. It was also stated that the Chinese Party stuck to the peasant partisan war alone, not out of principle but out of sheer necessity. After weighing the issues, the Party came to the conclusion : "The grand alliance of the working class and the peasantry, acting in unison, the combination of workers' and peasants' struggles under the leadership of the Communist Party, and utilising all lessons of history, for the conduct of the struggles, is the path for us." This was claimed to be the path of Leninism applied to Indian conditions.

In the light of this decision, the Party chalked out its agrarian policy of taking land from the landlords and handing it over to the peasants. It was also pointed out that the Party had to rouse sections of peasantry including rich peasants for the struggle for agrarian reform and in the course of this struggle rebuild united peasant organisations.

(ii) LABOUR. From the beginning the Party naturally paid attention to the working class movement. The working class, relying on agricultural workers, together with the whole people is to lead the battle in towns and rural areas to liberation, to land and bread, to work and peace. The Party's declared policy is to fight for radical improvements in the living conditions of the labourers through Trade Union struggles including collective bargaining and strikes. It does not approve of *satyagraha* because it disrupts mass participation and is as ineffective as individual terrorism. It reduces the masses to the role of spectators.

The Communist attitude to Trade Union organisations has never been consistent. They first had a Red TUC. In the days of the United Front, they dissolved the Red TUC and affiliated their unions with AITUC and in due course they came to control the AITUC. Under Ranadive's leadership, they resumed their sectarian labour policy and the Congress and Socialist minded labour had to organise themselves as the INTUC and the Hind Mazdoor Sabha respectively. Now with the adoption of "democratic" and "broad democratic" united front policy, the Communists are again approaching other Trade Union organisations for bringing about a united organisation. Their frequent shift of policies shows that for them the Trade Union has no independent role of its own apart from being a political tool.

(iii) LANGUAGE. It must be said to the credit of the Party that with regard to linguistic States the Party policy throughout has been consistent. The Party has always stood for the linguistic division of the country in order to achieve effective participation of all people in the administration. Another argument in favour of the linguistic States is that they alone lead to "the full flowering of culture" which again is necessary for the success of democracy. However, the Madura Congress of the Party warns against the "bourgeois-nationalist deviation" in relation to linguistic States. The Madura Congress declares that "in India today the unity of the toiling masses of all nationalities is the important thing—far more important than the unity of all classes inside the same nationality. We should

note that the demands for linguistic States is a demand which unites all the classes inside a nationality, including the feudal class. We do not reject such a unity, but we consider the unity of the toiling masses of different nationalities as the most precious thing which must not be violated at any cost". It is obvious from this statement that for them class solidarity has priority over national solidarity, which suggests their linguistic policy is only a means to their class politics.

(iv) ATTITUDE TO THE CONGRESS GOVERNMENT. The attitude of the Party towards the Government and the Congress Party has undergone marked changes. Immediately after independence, the Party viewed the Congress as a "reactionary bloc of Indian imperialists, landowners and princes". The Party's views about the economy of the country and also about foreign policy were intimately connected with its view of the Government. The Party held that the Government was still keeping the country subservient to the British imperialists, economically by allowing British capital a free play in India, and politically by opting to stay within the Commonwealth. Hence the Party demanded the confiscation of all British capital in India and the complete severance of India from the Commonwealth. It condemned the Government for "turning out to be the means of looting the State budget by foreign firms of experts and suppliers, for suppressing all civil liberties of the people, outlawing political parties and groups, banning trade unions and imprisoning workers, peasants, students....".

When the Constitution was drawn up, the Party belittled the importance of the Republic, questioned

the effectiveness of adult franchise and declared that the Constitution guaranteed no rights to the people which were enforceable in any way or were not subject to violation by the emergency autocratic decrees of the bureaucracy. The First Five-Year Plan was, according to the Party, a plan by which the Indian ruling class had hoped to strengthen their own economy and stabilise their political position in the country.

And yet, it has not been easy for the Party to define its attitude to the Nehru Government at any one time, and that is one of the biggest problems the Party has always had to face. This is so mainly because of the foreign policy of the Government which even the Communist Party could not characterise as merely an imperialist-led one. The friendly relations of the Government with the Soviet Union, its readiness to recognise the People's Republic of China and its efforts to secure a seat for New China in the UNO, its refusal to fall in line with the West in many important matters—all these were facts which the Party had to give credit for. Yet the Party made an attempt to describe the Government as being "tied to British and American imperialists". In its Election Manifesto in 1951 the Party criticised the foreign policy of the Government as follows : "A government tied to imperialists, a government that establishes a reactionary regime at home cannot pursue an independent and progressive foreign policy, a genuine policy of peace....It (the Nehru Government) has sided with the Anglo-American imperialists on most issues in the UNO including the sanction of American aggression in Korea. It expressed its 'humanitarianism' by sending an ambulance

corps to the murderers of the Korean people. It has not condemned the indiscriminate bombing of Korean cities and villages. It has given the French transport facilities to wage war against the people of Viet Nam. It has given direct support to the British imperialists in Malaya by permitting them to recruit Gurkha troops. It has shipped arms to the aid of the reactionary Thakin Nu Government against the Burmese people. It has curtailed trade with China and had prohibited the export of certain goods to China because of American objection. It has not developed trade with the democratic countries like the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies preferring trade relations with the imperialists who want to keep us dependent on them." Such are the sins of omission and commission in the Government's foreign policy. At the same time, the Party also conceded that "sometimes under the pressure of the people and due to its own weaknesses, the Nehru Government opposes those measures of the imperialists which may immediately plunge the whole world into war". The Madura session of the Party Congress (December 1953-January 1954) admitted that "very often we have taken an eclectic attitude towards the Nehru Government. We have stated that we support those acts that are good for the people and oppose those that are bad for the people. This, of course is true, but this is no line at all: it is like the proverbial curate's egg—good in parts."

No doubt the Party was confused—a confusion which it has not yet overcome, as will be shown later on. It made the position clear; but could not make up its mind about the line to adopt. For instance, the Madura Congress asserted: "There can be only

two basic lines : co-operate with the Government but criticise specific acts or oppose the Government but support specific acts. Here it is not a question of different emphasis only. These are two different lines."

Why the Party was not able to make up its mind in the matter must be investigated. The fact is that the Party has been for a long time split between certain irreconcilable views regarding who the "enemy of the people of India" is.

The two main schools of thought can be roughly described as "anti-American" and "anti-British". The traditional line of the Party was to say that imperialism was the greatest enemy of the people of India and that therefore anti-Americanism was to be the policy of the Party. To consider America as the main enemy would mean "lining up behind the Nehru Government on the plea of fighting the American threat". But the more militant group led by Rajeswar Rao pointed out in the *Andhra Thesis* that "it is wrong to talk of a general anti-imperialist fight without specifying the particular imperialism". The *Andhra Thesis* went on to show that British imperialism was the chief enemy of our national progress and therefore of our national independence. Acceptance of this thesis would mean fighting against the *internal* policies of the Government on such issues as land reform, industrialisation, particularly on the question of foreign capital in India. To decide between the two was not easy. But the Party came to a conclusion that "the basic struggle in our case is the struggle against British domination and feudalism". This meant that for the Party, opposition to the Congress once again became a "national

issue" in which all progressive-minded people in the country were to participate. The Party, thus, reiterated its plea for a "Government of Democratic Unity".

This "Democratic Unity" was vastly different from the old "Democratic Front" policy. The new unity was not to be only of Leftist parties but "the drawing in of the vast masses who are getting disillusioned with the Congress and also with the Socialist Party, but are not yet prepared to subscribe to the entire programme of our Party". The importance, the Party attached to this policy, may be seen from a statement of Ajoy Ghosh, the secretary of the Party, in his speech moving the political resolution before the Madura Congress. He said : "Our overriding consideration should be to ensure the maximum mass mobilisation under the Democratic Front, and whatever stands in the way of that, whether our own sectarian or dogmatic outlook or rigid organisational concepts, has to be given up."

The present policy of the Party is essentially the same, except that the Democratic Front has now become more inclusive. For instance, in the February (1956) issue of the *New Age*, Ajoy Ghosh says : "In scope as well as in aim, this Democratic Front which is envisaged is national. It is not a Front of the toiling masses alone ; nor does it, at this stage, set before itself socialistic objectives. It is a Front of the *national* democratic revolution. The conclusion should not be drawn from this that the Democratic Front is a front of only those who accept the entire programme of the Communist Party. It is wrong to believe that the Democratic Front is to be made up only of those

who feel that the present Government has to be ousted from power and replaced by a people's democratic government or at least by a government of democratic unity." In other words, the Party is now pretending to be "all things to all men".

The technique of the Democratic Front is very subtle. The Front is to be a permanent feature, but the immediate objectives of the Front and the specific methods of building it may be different, depending on the concrete situation. For example, if there is to be a threat of invasion from outside, the immediate objective of the Front will be to support the existing Government. On the other hand, in a situation when the mass movement has reached a high stage, when very large sections of the masses have taken a revolutionary position, the immediate objective of the Front becomes that of the removal of the Government from power. Ajoy Ghosh asserts that this is the direction towards which the mass movement has to be led. As illustrations for the Democratic Front technique, Ghosh cites the Goa Liberation Campaign, the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement and the united action of the working class against the rationalisation drive of the mill-owners in Kanpur.

But this is not the only task of the Front. The Front is also to be a process of strengthening the forces of "democracy" which demand continuous struggle against the growing strength of monopoly capital in our economic, political and social life. Thus partly, the Front is also to be used as a force to strengthen Leftist unity. "While fighting the anti-popular policies of the Congress we have also to wage an

ideological struggle in a fraternal way with the parties of the Left, pointing out to them their mistakes." The hands are those of Esau, but the voice definitely is Jacob's !

### The Communist Party at Cross-roads

Events at home and abroad have created a crisis of the first order within the ranks of the Communist Party. 1955 was the turning point of the Party, and the Andhra elections were probably the first indication of the crisis. In Andhra the Communists and their supporters thought they had popular backing. The Congress had lost its prestige and the other opposition parties were hopelessly divided. Hence the Party naturally hoped to come to power after the new elections for the Andhra Assembly. The real issue was not only the formation of a government in the State. It was a much contested test case. But in the elections most of its leaders, including one member of the Politbureau, were completely routed. This defeat came when they were least prepared for it. The Party confessed that its "calculations had gone wrong", and retired to reflect silently upon what had happened.

In June Pandit Nehru went on his goodwill expedition to Soviet Russia and the Eastern Democracies. Everywhere he was received as the champion of free Asia, the ambassador of peace, and the great leader of a great people. It was no longer possible for the Communists to denounce Nehru and his Government as imperialist agents and feudal oppressors. The proclamation of the *Panch Shila*, the way it was commended by all "progressive-minded" people and

nations, the Chinese Premier's visit to India and Nehru's return visit, and the part played by India to create the "Geneva spirit" were all indications of the success of the foreign policy of the Government which the Communists had viewed with suspicion. And it was firmly established that the Indian Government was genuinely friendly towards the Soviet Union, China and the Eastern Democracies. On the foreign front the Government scored a definite victory over the Communists.

At home also the Communists had been slowly losing ground. The attempt of the Government to fight feudal vestiges, the Five-Year Plan, the Community Projects and the policy of nationalisation make it now impossible for the Party to say that the Government is reactionary. The acceptance by the Congress of the socialistic pattern of society as its objective has added to the confusion of the Communists. The Avadi session of the Congress, where this objective was accepted, on the eve of the Andhra elections, must definitely have contributed to the defeat of the Communists there. In most of the bye-elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Legislatures, the Communist record has been poor.

Towards the end of the year came another setback—the visit of the Russian leaders. It may be true that this visit has given some "respectability" to Communism, but the glowing terms in which the Soviet leaders praised not only Nehru but the achievements of free India under the Congress Party, have baffled the comrades. This is not only a practical defeat for the Party but also an ideological one. The

Soviet leaders admitted that progress was possible under other systems as well. They made it perfectly clear that they had no intentions of "exporting" Communism to other countries. They also endorsed the principle of "co-existence". In fact they admitted that each country had to evolve its own pattern and techniques of development, thereby invalidating most of the theoretical and doctrinaire claims of the Party.

Nor is this all. Recent developments in the Soviet system have also contributed to the perplexity in the Party ranks. The denunciation of the "personality cult" which is a doubtful victory even for the Russian Communists, is a definite set-back for Communists outside the Soviet Union. This incident made them, as the *New Statesman and Nation* has put it, "servile apologists". The paper goes on to say : "Russian Communists can cite the secret police as their excuse: though they knew what was happening they could not speak. No such defence is open to Communists in other countries."

Khrushchev in his report to the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party has made it clear that it is possible to achieve socialism through means other than the traditional Communist way ; that is, "to capture a stable majority in parliament and transform the latter from an organ of bourgeois democracy into a genuine instrument of the people's will".

On the eve of their visit to Britain the Soviet leaders announced the dissolution of the Cominform. The secretary of the Communist Party of India said that since India was not a member of the Comin-

form, its dissolution did not matter to the Party. But a study of the history of the Party has shown that though formally the Communist Party of India was not a member of the Cominform, its policies were often decided by the directions of the Russian Party and this may still continue.

The total impact of all these developments is to make the Communist Party of India a refugee. The country of its birth has disowned it and it is still a stranger and a sojourner in this land. "Quo Vadis" is the big question before the Party now. Till now the Party had only to draw up its policies without bothering to discuss its principles and philosophy. This was the greatest strength of the Party so far; this is going to be the greatest weakness of the Party from now on.

So far, the Party unquestionably believed in the Marxist philosophy and its interpretations by its Russian high-priests, and looked to Moscow for directions. It preferred the theories of Moscow to the realities of India.

This was not merely a policy of the Party but was inherent in its fundamental tenets. Communism has a determinist faith in the division of society into two warring classes. This class-war is a historical necessity of universal application. All members of the human race are consciously or unconsciously involved in this struggle. Hence the individual has no significance except as a member of the class. And when the class-war is taken seriously, individual liberty, freedom and rights are all to be surrendered in the interests

of the class. The Communist Party, as the vanguard of the militant proletarian class, determines the policies of the class in the big struggle and hence demands complete obedience just as a commander's orders are to be obeyed implicitly by an ordinary soldier. Communism, then, is no party programme ; it is a militant creed. This has been very well brought out in the recent attack on the "personality cult" and the dethroning of Stalin (after his death!). *The Pravda* wrote an elaborate editorial after the Twentieth Party Congress showing how the "cult of the individual" is alien to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism. But the difference between theory and practice arose because of the rigid party structure, based on "democratic centralism", another aspect of the theory itself. The Soviet leaders now proclaim that they could not raise their voice against the atrocities of Stalin because they could not criticise the Party and its chief. The same is true today. Stalin may be criticised : he is dead. The Party cannot be criticised : it is alive. And who can guarantee that the one-party rule will not give rise again to another dictator or half-a-dozen dictators ? A system which claims infallibility and therefore suppresses all opposition has nothing in itself to prevent dictatorship of the individual or the collective. The repetition of the "personality cult" cannot be prevented by denouncing a dead leader. It is an inevitable manifestation of the system itself.

It is in this background that the CPI's decision to be a "democratic party" should be reviewed. To become a democratic party means much more than contesting the elections. It means accepting the logic of democracy. The Party must face this issue in the

light of modern developments. Some of the factors that the Party has to reckon with may be noted.

The relevance of any party depends upon the extent to which it is indigenous. Parties must first be loyal to their own nation states. Severance of extra-territorial loyalties is the initial step towards it. But it has also a positive aspect, becoming relevant to the conditions—economic, social and political—of the country. The CPI claims that it has never had extra-territorial loyalties. Even if this were true, it can still be said that it has not established itself fully in the Indian soil, facing, analysing and solving the problems of the country. Jennie Lee was right in pointing out during her visit to India that the great enemy of Indian progress at the present time was not *political* obstacle, but the “hard obstinate fact of mass poverty”. But is it not true that the CPI has never had anything more than doctrinaire political remedies for India’s problems ? This is adequately revealed if one goes through a catalogue of Party publications. Most of the literature is in the form of political pamphlets about current problems. There are rare exceptions like Ranadive’s *The Crisis of Indian Economy* and Dange’s *India from Primitive Communism to Slavery*. But even there, the attempt is to fit the Indian situation into the Marxist framework.

Equally important is it to rethink the Party’s attitude towards “revolution”. When Marx exhorted the workers of the world to unite for (if necessary, an armed) revolution, sickles and hammers were the *only* weapons that they could lay hold of. But things have changed a lot during the last century. In many countries

including India, the democratic framework and the contents of democracy have widened considerably. Today every citizen has certain fundamental rights of his own which can be judicially enforced and defended. And also every citizen has the right of franchise. In the light of these changes, is it not reasonable to assert that the social and economic revolution can be achieved, and is to be achieved if it is not to betray itself, through democratic means ? Communists may say yes to this. But we have to ask the further question if their loyalty to democracy is sincere, whether they are prepared to give up the totalitarian principle of what they call "democratic centralism" in their party organisation and the idea of the one-party "dictatorship of the proletariat" and give evidence that their adherence to fundamental human rights and the right of opposition are more than tactical. Of course they have to deny the whole philosophy of Communism and accept the idea of democratic socialism to do this. In this case, the Communist Party will have no justification for existence as a party !.

It was expected that the Party would face some of these issues at its Fourth Congress at Palghat from the 19th to 29th April this year. But to those who watched the session with critical interest, it came as a disappointment. This was more so considering the fact that recent developments had given the Party the freedom which it could have used to shape its own future.

But the Party did nothing more than discuss a few immediate problems and review its technique of "democratic unity". A glance through the Political

Resolution amply substantiates this. It is a mere reproduction of familiar party slogans : a word of appreciation for the foreign policy of the Government, especially the recent ties of friendship with the Socialist countries ; a warning against imperialist pressure ; an appeal to strengthen the struggle for peace ; some random remarks about industrialisation ; an assurance of support for the progressive measures of the Government ; and in the end the oft-repeated exhortation for the national unity of all patriotic and democratic elements in all parties.

## Conclusion

At one time the Communist Party appeared to many to be the only party effectively sponsoring the cause of the economically and socially oppressed against communal and feudal interests. In Marxism it seemed to possess an integrated world-view which grappled with some of the new forces of change. In the discipline of the Party, there was a certain order and authority which was in marked contrast to the rather disorganised state of affairs in society. Among its leaders were people who were inspired by high patriotism and could inspire others by their sacrificial living. All these made a strong appeal to the educated. The worker and peasant found in the Party their champion. Today however, the moral and intellectual appeal of the Party has been deflated ; the totalitarian principle inherent in Communism has turned every good into an evil, and every truth into a falsehood. Even the workers and peasants no more feel dependent on the

Communist Party backing them ; socialism has become the basis of national planning.

The main appeal of the Party today lies in the fact that it is the best organised among the opposition parties. Some may even be misled by its present tendencies to appear to be genuinely national and democratic. Those who are urged to vote Communist should however remember that, so far, the Party has given no evidence of a real break with its own past or of a true democratic transformation. It is not yet a party with whom our country's future can be trusted.

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## Christian Insights for Politics

WE have made certain human values our criteria for evaluating the political parties, their ideologies, policies and programmes. They are values that determine our national goals, our community of aims. It is not always necessary to discuss the reasons for our commitment to these values ; in fact our commitment to them is the basis of co-operation among all citizens, irrespective of religion or ideology, for the common good. But values cannot be long retained in their vitality unless they are seen in relation to the ultimate Truth. Therefore, Christians, like the adherents of other religious persuasions, have a duty to relate their commitment to national goals, to the presuppositions of their faith.

### Men as Persons

Political democracy stands or falls with the concept of the infinite worth of the individual human person. The human person is distorted by poverty and suppressed by unjust customs ; therefore the demand for economic development and social change is based on a concern for men as persons.

The Christian belief in God as Creator and Redeemer is extremely relevant to this idea of the dignity of the individual person. The Bible declares belief in a *personal* God, creating man as part of the

natural world, but also with freedom to transcend it to share God's purpose and to enter into communion with Him. Man alienated himself from God. But God assumed humanity in the *Person* of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who through His Cross and Resurrection opened a way to man for divine fellowship. The Christian estimate of man is derived primarily from what Christ taught and did. Man has natural functions ordained by God, but the primary fact about him is that, in Christ he is called to eternal sonship of God. The obligation to respond to this call in freedom is the core of his personality, the basis of his eternal status as a person. And this freedom, which God has given in Christ, no man can take away. Even death cannot destroy it. We look for "the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting". Human dignity, therefore, is ultimately derived from the fact that he is a "brother for whom Christ died". The "least one" among men, the "poorest, the lowliest and the lost", has "infinite worth" because of what God had done in Christ for him. Indeed, man has his rational faculty, social status, political and economic functions, conferring dignity upon man, but they are so only because they are means for his personal development. His personal status should find expression in and through them.

The Christian Church can strengthen the revolutionary concept of freedom and dignity of the human person best, by the untiring proclamation of Christ, Who calls every man freely to decide for or against Him. This religious call and the religious response of personal decision are the Christian foundations of man's fundamental right to freedom in society.

Therefore, the Christian's religious concern for the preaching of the Gospel of Christ and his concern as a citizen for political democracy and social justice are all of one piece ; they are integral to each other.

Is there historical justification for the affirmation that the Gospel always brings a sense of dignity and freedom to men ? It is a moot question. One can easily show how human freedom was won in the West in protest against the established authority in the Church. But the important point to remember is that this protest itself was inspired to a great extent by the Gospel. The role religious non-conformity played in the birth and growth of democracy in England and America should not be underestimated. Even when the protest against established authorities was secular in origin, it was a secularism with a distinct mark of Christian culture and Christian ethic stamped on it.

Even in our country, Christianity has been a mission to "preach deliverance to the captives and recovering sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised", a social mission indeed. The Church was everywhere engaged in healing the body, enlightening the mind and awakening the conscience of society—in the name of the dignity conferred on every man by the Gospel. The Christian Church roused the conscience of the people against the inhuman practices of untouchability, the rigid customs of caste exclusivism and the harsh sanctions of tradition which denied Indian women equal rights with men. The early village converts to Christianity from low caste and outcaste groups fought "against fierce prejudice and traditional conservatism in order

to wrest their human rights"; they were also "the pioneers of reform in the matter of women's rights, the sanctity of the home and the family, the early agitators for just wages and higher standards of life". Even if the Church's support of the struggle for political freedom and of the large-scale social reforms associated with the national movement was grudging and far from adequate, the role the figure of Christ and the Christian institutions played in creating the early ferment cannot be held in doubt.

### Justice and Love

The essence of justice is the guarantee of the human dignity, *i.e.*, giving what is due to man as man. Though justice must necessarily find expression in concrete human laws, it is not dependent upon the whims and fancies of individuals or particular communities. The most widely accepted form in which this may be stated is the concept of Law, call it natural, moral or divine, as being the source of the laws written or unwritten, by which men order their daily life, and as summing up the whole sense of justice without which human life is intolerable.

People who do not believe in the moral foundations of the laws of the nation and of the State itself, can have no valid argument against totalitarianism or against converting politics into the naked self-seeking of individuals or parties. The belief in a universal moral law by which all alike are bound is the indispensable basis of the mutual respect and obligation in any society or State.

Reverence for the transcendent law results in a certain humility and the sense of human finitude. This humility is the spirit of true toleration. Justice is "too large and rich to be apprehended in its fulness by any single individual, group, school or party"; it can be "found only by the collaboration of many minds and the clash of opposed opinion". People animated by this conviction will be prepared to "acknowledge the elements of truth in their opponents' case", "to listen to his exposition of it with a view to discovering points which they themselves have missed and to understanding the reasons for what seem to them to be errors"; they will hope for "a larger synthesis" out of the clash of irreconcilable opinions. Opposition parties and election fevers are a reminder to us that we all seek to live for and serve a transcendent Justice. Our opposition to one another itself is an expression of our common loyalty to Justice.

The Christian life in the Church reinforces the idea of a transcendent law as a prerequisite for a community of free persons. The Church is understood as a community in covenant relationship with Christ its Lord. It is of the very nature of this covenant that it puts the members of the Church in mutual obligation. It is on this truth that a local congregation is founded. It follows that the Christian life is not merely "a private affair between a man and his Maker", but a social life lived on earth under the lordship of Christ. The Christian Congregation held together by the Covenant of Christ is a revelation of the truth that society to be truly human, should acknowledge responsibility to a law beyond it.

No doubt there is a danger here of a static definition of the eternal moral law. Vested interests, by claiming religious sanction for the *status quo* may exploit the concept for their own selfish purpose. The defence of slavery, capitalism and racialism as the law of God are illustrations to the point. In our own country, the opposition to the Hindu Code Bill in the name of eternal *dharma* is an example. Secularism and Marxism have rightly raised a protest against this perversion of moral values. Very often, the secular principle of "muddling through" seems better able to grasp the moral and political realities of dynamic situations than the moral legalistic approach.

But the danger has arisen not from a sense of moral reality but from identifying it with the laws and values of a particular society, or the *status quo*. The Christian Church proclaims the Cross of Christ as the revelation of the ultimate law of love; but in so doing, it also proclaims the transcendence of the law of love over the Roman law of justice under which Christ was crucified and for that matter over all other historical achievements of relative justice in society. Till the final consummation of Christ's Kingdom, our partial realisations of it must ever be judged in the light of the supreme revelation of love and forgiveness in the Crucified Christ and renewed by its power.

### State will Not Wither

A foreign visitor recently observed that the climate of opinion in India had "got something of the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi, something of the spirit of Karl Marx and something of the spirit of 19th

century British liberalism". Gandhism, Marxism and Liberalism have all contributed to the evolution of the ideas of democracy and socialism in India. They are a rich heritage for the nation to preserve. But common to all these ideologies is their incapacity to understand the perennial perversion of human virtue by self-love. They all believe that given the right historical conditions there will be "ultimately a stateless society". Underlying it is the shallow view that evil is due to removable historic accidents. But the Cross of Christ exposes a certain depth of human nature which implies enmity to God and indeed led to the murder of the Divine Incarnate. It is seen therefore that the self-love of man is rooted in the spirit of man; his alienation from God and his anxiety to overcome his finitude result in elevating his own self to the place of God. This alienation from God is basic to man's alienation from himself and from his fellowmen, whether expressed in imperialism, class-war, totalitarianism or other forms of exploitation. In the Christian understanding, self-love is more than a merely accidental tendency which will disappear with change of environment. The corruption of power is a fact to be reckoned with in any organisation of social life. This does not mean that we should resign ourselves to the perversions of power. Indeed men should be protected from them. The State, therefore, becomes a permanent necessity to safeguard human freedom and the State, being itself subject to perversion, needs within its own structure checks so that it may serve and not suppress human freedom. Richard Crossman in the *New Fabian Essays* dealing with the philosophy of the British Labour Party, seeks one clue to the Party's loss of

momentum in its lack of a philosophy of history which could take human perversion seriously. He says: "The evolutionary and revolutionary philosophies of progress have both proved false. Judging by the facts, there is far more to be said for the Christian doctrine of Original Sin than for Rousseau's fantasy of the noble savage or Marx's vision of the classless society." The Christian doctrine of sin brings to our conception of man and the State a realism, a much-needed corrective to the prevailing utopianism inherent in much of the current political philosophies in India. The Bible says that God has "ordained" the State "for the punishment of evil-doers and for the praise of them that do well"; for this legitimate purpose, the State has coercive power (the "sword"). We may not expect the State to be organised on *ahimsa* or that the acts of Parliament will make men good. What we may demand of the State is that it preserves order and creates and maintains a structure of law within which the practice of *ahimsa* and the movements of converting man to goodness and God may have freedom.

### The Power that Sustains

We have seen that the Christian faith affirms the moral foundation as well as the moral limitation of the State. Politics is power-politics, and it is dirty. Therefore men with moral sense very often shun it. But to leave politics to people devoid of moral sense is disastrous.

Our faith in Christ who took our flesh upon himself and exposed himself to the temptations of the world

implies a responsibility not to keep aloof from politics. When, however, we face the moral ambiguities of politics we are sustained by the faith expressed in the words : "I believe in the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection of the body". In the ever-present Christian hope of a final transformation in Christ of the whole world, and in the continuous experience of divine forgiveness here and now, there is a power that strengthens us for our political tasks. This power nerves us against despair and nihilism. It comes to us through the Holy Spirit. It is the power of the Risen Christ who lives and works in the world to bring the Kingdom of God to its final consummation. The Church exists to witness to this until the "Kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ".

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